

No. 23

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# ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY



## JACK LIGHTFOOT'S TALISMAN

OR THE ONLY WAY TO WIN GAMES IN BASEBALL

BY MAURICE STEVENS



As the runaway balloon broke loose from its moorings, and soared aloft, Tom Lightfoot was seen to clamber over the side of the wildly swaying basket.



**Publishers' Note.** "Teach the American boy how to become an athlete, and lay the foundation for a Constitution greater than that of the United States."—Wise sayings from "Tip Top." There has never been a time when the boys of this great country took so keen an interest in all manly and health-giving sports as they do to-day. As proof of this witness the record-breaking throngs that attend college struggles on the gridiron, as well as athletic and baseball games, and other tests of endurance and skill. In a multitude of other channels this love for the "life strenuous" is making itself manifest, so that, as a nation, we are rapidly forging to the front as seekers of honest sport. Recognizing this "handwriting on the wall," we have concluded that the time has arrived to give this vast army of young enthusiasts a publication devoted exclusively to invigorating out-door life. We feel we are justified in anticipating a warm response from our sturdy American boys, who are sure to revel in the stirring phases of sport and adventure, through which our characters pass from week to week.

# ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY

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## JACK LIGHTFOOT'S TALISMAN;

OR,

The Only Way to Win Games in Baseball.

By MAURICE STEVENS.

### CHARACTERS IN THIS STORY.

**Jack Lightfoot**, the best all-round athlete in Cranford or vicinity, a lad clear of eye, clean of speech, and, after he had conquered a few of his faults, possessed of a faculty for *doing things* while others were talking, that by degrees caused him to be looked upon as the natural leader in all the sports Young America delights in—a boy who in learning to conquer himself put the power into his hands to wrest victory from others.

**Tom Lightfoot**, Jack's cousin, and sometimes his rival; though their striving for the mastery was always of the friendly, generous kind. Tom was called the "Book-Worm" by his fellows, on account of his love for studying such secrets of nature as practical observers have discovered and published; so that he possessed a fund of general knowledge calculated to prove useful when his wandering spirit took him abroad into strange lands.

**Ned Skeen**, of impulsive, nervous temperament, but a good friend of Jack's.

**Nat Kimball**, an undersized fellow, whose hobby was the study of *jiu-jitsu*, and who had a dread of germs.

**Lafe Lampton**, a big, hulking chap, with an ever present craving for something to eat. Lafe always had his appetite along, and proved a staunch friend of our hero through thick and thin.

**Jubal Marlin**, **Wilson Crane**, **Phil Kirtland**, **Brodie Strawn**, some of Jack's friends connected with the gymnasium and the baseball club.

**Jerry Mulligan**, a broth of an Irish boy, and one who believed Jack Lightfoot the greatest ever.

**Delancy Shelton**, who loved to pose as a wealthy young swell, **Reel Snodgrass**, a boy who recently came to Cranford from India.

**Lily Livingston**, **Katie Strawn**, **Nellie Conner**, some of the girls of Cranford.

**Mrs. Lightfoot**, the dearest little mother in the world, according to Jack.

### CHAPTER I.

#### THE SCHEMES OF A YANKEE.

Two summer youths, outwardly immaculate, came down the walk that led from Cranford to the lake, and in doing so passed the gym over the old carriage shop.

They were Reel Snodgrass and Delancy Shelton, and they were dressed exactly alike—in white duck trousers, cap and shoes, blue-flannel coat, dark-blue silk shirt, with jaunty sailor tie and russet belt to complete the neat and attractive attire.

Apparently they had not a care in the world, and nothing to do but to amuse themselves; yet at that very moment their brains were seething with plans against Jack Lightfoot and the Cranford nine.

Jack was sitting with some of his friends in what Jubal Marlin called his "office," which was a railed



space in one corner of the gym, with a window overlooking the street.

Here Jubal, keen Yankee that he was, sat in his leisure hours, planning how he could grow rich when he became a man; and the schemes that Jubal concocted at various times were wild and wonderful enough.

Beholding those natty summer youths, and recalling the exhibitions which Reel Snodgrass had given of his hypnotic powers, Jubal began to lament the fact that this marvelous boy from Bombay was not still a member of the nine.

"Jist see what yeou lost, by kicking him aout of it," he remarked to Jack.

"We got rid of a scoundrel and a mischief-maker," said Jack.

"Well, he ain't honest, of course, fer he sold them signals that time; but if we'd been friendly with him, instid of rilin' him—kind of patted him on the back, yeou know—he'd took to us, I don't doubt, and he could 'a' been a paowerful help."

"Just how?" cried Lafe, who disliked Reel Snodgrass apparently even more than Jack did.

"Well, naow, we c'd have got him to dew some hypnotin' fer us. An' we could have got him tew teach it to us. I'd give a good deal tew know haow tew work that, you bet."

Then he laughed.

"F'r instance, they say that when a feller's hypn'tized he'll do whatever the hypn'tizer tells him tew. We could 'a' got him tew hypn'tize the hull nine of us, whenever we was abaout tew go intew a ball game—hypnotize us so's we couldn't miss, mebbe; eh hypnotize us so that the ball would look big when it was comin' tew us when we was at th' bat."

He laughed again and shifted in his chair.

"Er, he could hypnotize, mebbe, the catcher of the other nine, and cause him to give wrong signals all the time and have t'other nine so balled up they wouldn't know whether they was standin' on their heads or on their heels; or, hypn'tize their pitcher so's he'd throw the ball too high whenever he throwed to the bases.

"Er, better yit," he laughed again, "hypn'tize the umpire so's he'd lean all the time to aour side when givin' his decisions. Ye see, it could be worked a good many ways, and worked so's we'd allus be dead certain to win."

Jack Lightfoot laughed as heartily as anyone at the pictures Jubal had drawn.

"There's just one danger, Jube, and you've forgotten it."

"What's that?"

"I don't know much about hypnotism; but Tom, who's been reading up on it since Reel came, says that if anything should happen to the hypnotizer while he had a person under his influence—if the hypnotizer, for instance, should die—the chances are great that the person hypnotized would never come out of the trance, or whatever other state he had been put in."

Jubal looked at him earnestly.

"I don't see haow that'd cut ice here—in this plan o' mine!"

"Well, your hypnotizer would be found out sometime and the other nine would simply kill him, and there our nine would be in that hypnotized condition forever after."

Jubal laughed his heavy "Haw! haw!" for he saw now that Jack was joking.

"By granny! if he left us in condition so that we jist natcherly couldn't lose games we'd be hot stuff in this league, er any other. We could plaow into the biggest leagues, by hemlock! and jist bu'st 'em wide open. Oh, say, I'd like to be hypn'tized that way and be on a nine that was in the same fix. Goshfry! we could make a mint of money playin' professional baseball!"

"And we'd have our pictures in the papers," said Lafe, "and crazy reporters chasing us around all the time writing us up. And the public would learn that Tom Lightfoot toes in, and that Jube sleeps with his mouth open, and that I've got a mole on the back of my neck that I use for a collar button. Great stuff, fellows! We'll do it."

"But I'm half in earnest abaout this," Jube protested. "Think what could be done if we had a feller on aour nine that could do hypnotin'! Great gov'nor, don't yeou see that we'd be on the winnin' side all the time? He could be hypnotizin' some feller in every game, an' work things right into aour hands."

"He could put us in such a condition," said Lafe, "that Old Wagon Tongue would seem as wide as a tennis racket and the ball from the pitcher loom up like a washtub. And then we could swipe anything that came within a mile of the plate. We could put the ball over the fence for a home run every time. And if we didn't quite put it over the fence he could have the fielder so buck-eyed that he couldn't find it even when it was right under his nose. Oh, say, that would be a cinch!"

"Well, naow, by granny! it would!" Jube insisted.



"Yeou fellers air allus guyin' me abaout my schemes, same's yeou guy Gnat Kimball abaout his germs and his jiu-jitsu; by gosh! there's somethin' in this one. It could be worked."

"So, you think we made a mistake in kicking Reel Snodgrass out of the nine?" said Jack.

"By granny! I dew. That feller is a wonder. See haow he come it over yeou that time, and haow he hypn'tized Phil Kirtland up at Loon Lake, that time when Reel got shnake bit foolin' with the rattler he'd tamed."\*

"By jacks," he went on, "I wish I could learn it! And if that feller was friendly with us he'd teach it to us, don't yeou see. And he'd work tricks fer us agin' other people. We could have more fun than a box of monkeys with the things he'd do. And as for money—well, seems tew me there'd be a mint o' money in it, fer him an' fer the hull nine, if it was worked right."

Lafe laughed so much that he almost fell off the bench on which he had lazily stretched himself.

"If you want money, Jube, go hunt up that old brass lamp that Aladdin had, and anything you touch will turn to money."

"Who's Aladdin? Never heard of him, and don't believe it, no haow. What kind of a lamp was this?"

"Didn't I say it was a brass lamp?"

"Don't believe it," said Jube. "That's jist a fool story. But there's somethin in this other."

He looked out of the window for a second.

"Naow, say, haow would it do fer me tew try tew git on the good side of that feller? He ain't got nothin' 'special agin' me as I know on, and mebbe I could work it; mebbe I could heal over this 'ere breach between him and the nine and git him back on it, and git him tew do some o' them things; and mebbe I could git him tew show me haow the trick is done, yeou see. By granny! I'd like tew tackle it."

Then the boys laughed again, for Jubal was this time seriously in earnest.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE MASCOT ON THE RUN.

Delancy Shelton and Reel Snodgrass had gone down to the academy boathouse, which stood close by the lake.

There the academy boys kept their boats and oars, and Reel, being privileged to use them, as an academy

student, thought of taking a sail that morning with Delancy.

Reel had a key to the boathouse door, and he let himself and his friend in.

Once within he began to inspect a gun, which he had been using more or less since coming to Cranford, and with which he had killed a rabbit.

He was so proud of that proof of his skill as a shot that he had nailed the rabbit skin up inside the boat-house to dry.

Putting down the gun, he examined the rabbit skin, which was so dry now that it rustled like stiff paper when he handled it.

A cat came mewling against his legs and seemed to want to get at the skin; and at almost the same moment Kate Strawn's shepherd dog, Rex, which she called the mascot of the Cranford nine, came sniffing along by the boathouse door.

The dog went on toward the water, sniffing the ground as he went.

But an idea had come to Reel Snodgrass.

He laughed, as he turned it over in his mind and began to tell Delancy about it.

"Try it," said Delancy, taking out a cigarette and striking a match against the boathouse door. "Aw, it would be fun if you could work it, don't you know!"

Reel called the cat to him; and then, though she objected, he wrapped her carefully in the rabbit skin, and with some string and pins secured it on her so that she looked very much like a rabbit. She was a small cat and the rabbit skin covered her completely.

Having done that, Reel took the cat outside the boathouse and whistled to Rex, and the dog came running when he heard the call.

Putting the cat down beside the boathouse, where she crouched in fear of her unpleasant predicament and did not even move, he whistled the dog upon her.

Perhaps Rex was not a very discerning dog; at any rate, he did not see the cat beneath the rabbit skin, but accepted the evidence of his eyes that here was a rabbit, and when the thing moved he became greatly excited.

"Sick him, Rex!" said Reel, while Delancy stood in the boathouse door with his cigarette in his mouth. "Sick him, Rex; do him up!"

Rex advanced for the purpose of "doing up" the "rabbit."

Then there was a squalling transformation.

Even a blind kitten will spit and scratch if you put your hand on it while your hand holds the odor of a dog you have just fondled.

\*See No. 20, "Jack Lightfoot in Camp."



The cat was somewhat like the blind kitten, being unable to see; but its smeller was in good working order; and when Rex's nose came close to it and he opened his mouth for a grab, the cat gave a wild squawl and reached for him, at the same time splitting the rabbit skin open and bursting out of it.

Her sharp claws struck Rex on the nose; and, then, before he could turn tail, she was on his back, biting and scratching furiously.

It was enough to set any dog insane—to have a rabbit turn to a cat and come at him that way; and Rex, with one wild yelp, struck a bee line for the street leading to Cranford, and went up it on the jump.

The cat scudded, dragging the rabbit skin off as she flew; and Reel Snodgrass and Delancy Shelton fell up against the boathouse door, roaring with laughter.

"Oh-h!" screamed Reel, doubling up with his hands on his stomach. "I shall bu'st!"

It was so funny to Delancy that he almost swallowed his cigarette, and he did swallow so much smoke that, with the laughing, his eyes were made to weep streams.

"That was great!" he yelled, slapping the door hysterically.

"Whoo-ee!" howled Reel. "Wouldn't Jack Lightfoot climb my collar if he saw that?"

He recovered sufficiently to go to the end of the boathouse, to watch the shepherd, as that frightened animal streaked it into town.

"Running like a tin-canned purp," he said, still laughing. "See him go—see him go! Wow! There goes the mascot. If Jack sees it he'll think it's gone mad or has a fit."

Delancy came to look, still shaking with glee.

"Going like a house afire. See him hit it up! I'm betting that he'll be in the heart of Cranford in two minutes by the watch. Oh, see him go! Bah Jove! but he's a runner, don't y' know!"

"Wheel! See him tearing past the gym! If Lightfoot sees that it will set him wild."

"And if Brodie Strawn finds out about it he'll hammer your face in."

"He'll not find out."

"And if his sister Kate learns of it—well, your goose is cooked with the Strawns, don't y' know! Nothing makes that girl so mad as to have anybody tease that dog, don't y' know! Bah Jove! she seems to think more of him than of some people."

"Of you, eh?"

"Oh, I'm all right with little Katie dear, don't y' know."

The dog was out of sight at a street corner, and if

his wild flight had been observed by the boys in the gym they showed no sign of it.

In truth, they did not see that mad run up the street, for at the moment their attention was drawn closely to another matter. So deeply were they interested that even if the dog had yelped as he passed the gym they probably would not have heard it.

When Rex had disappeared and no one came out of the gym Reel picked up the dragged rabbit skin, and threw it into the boathouse.

"The cat ran toward the lake," said Delancy. "I guess—aw—she drowned herself."

"I wish I could make Jack Lightfoot and the whole Cranford nine run like that mascot did," said Reel, with a trace of bitterness.

Then his face took on sudden color.

"Say," he said, "that suggests something!"

Delancy was lighting another cigarette.

"Does it, y' know? It suggested a streak of lightning to me."

"Why can't I work that somehow, to scare the mascot into a fit right in the middle of a ball game? Some of those fellows are such fools that if the mascot went wrong in the middle of a game they'd lose their grip and not be able to do a thing."

"Aw, you might get some fun out of it!"

"More than fun."

"If you didn't—aw—get your head hammered off by Brodie or Jack for fooling with the mascot, don't y' know!"

"I'd risk it, and I believe I can work it."

"Or if you didn't—aw—make Kate Strawn so mad that she wouldn't ever speak to you again!"

"What do I care for Kate Strawn?"

Delancy looked at him through his cloud of smoke.

"Well—aw—don't y' know, I thought you did; I thought you did, y' know. And there's her brother—a——" He took out his cigarette. "I should be glad, don't y' know, if you and he would mix, some time, and you'd knock his head off."

"Because he thinks too much of Lily Livingston?"

"Just—aw—because, don't y' know! He's so deuced insulting in his manner."

"Yes, I know he is, a regular black-faced thug, for looks. Why, I've seen fellows in India with faces something like his, and they were chaps you'd want to keep away from."

Delancy stepped to the corner again and looked up the street.

The cigarette almost dropped from his mouth.

"Hello!" he said, his pale blue eyes widening. "One



of them fellows is coming down here, don't y' know, to settle about that, perhaps! He seems to be coming in a hurry."

With one jump Reel was at the corner and looking.

"Jubal Marlin," he exclaimed. "What in thunder can he want? Maybe they saw the dog and have sent him down here to say something to us about it."

### CHAPTER III.

#### A SURPRISING COMMUNICATION.

The thing that had kept the boys in the gym from knowing that the mascot had gone by the carriage shop like a streak of fire was a letter which Nat Kimball had brought down from the post office.

It was addressed to the Cranford nine.

"From Cardiff," said Jack, when he saw the postmark.

Then he tore open the envelope, and read, with all the boys grouping round him and reading with him:

"To the CRANFORD BASEBALL NINE:

"You know, of course, of the big fair and celebration which Cardiff is holding in honor of the fiftieth anniversary of the foundation of the city. We are having big crowds, and the exhibitions are first-class. We are making great arrangements for Saturday. In the first place, we have arranged for a balloon ascension to help draw the people out. In addition, we want to have a good baseball game. Our Cardiff nine has looked the field over, and this letter is the result. You fellows down there in Cranford have made a reputation for yourselves; though I guess, of course, you know that, all right. You're wearing the belt in your Four-Town League, and you capped the sheaf when you went against Highland last week and gave them a whitewash. Everybody is talking about that game. Now, we've got a hot nine up here in Cardiff. We've played more baseball than you have; but, nevertheless, you fellows seem to be pretty warm boys. And now to the point. We want you to play Cardiff in our fair grounds here on Saturday. We'll furnish passes on the railroad for your nine and substitutes, and your hotel bills won't cost you anything. In addition, the fair-ground management will contribute fifty dollars to your high-school gym, as a gift. We promise to give you the freedom of the city besides, and keep you out of jail while you're having a good time. We think you'll enjoy the trip. Cardiff never looked prettier than this week. Wire us at once if you can come. Don't fail—wire at once.

RAY GILBERT,

"Capt. Cardiff Athletic Club."

The boys were exclaiming their surprise in many keys and with many words.

"Howling mackerels, we've got to take that in!" said Skeen, his eyes snapping.

"By granny! I think I'd like to go!" declared Jubal. "Cardiff is a big place, and there'll be wads o' things to see there durin' the fair."

"Can we beat the Cardiff nine?" Jack asked.

"We can try," said Skeen.

"I'll do my part," cackled Kimball, who generally played substitute and sat in the benches during a game. "If you don't win, it won't be my fault."

"And about that money," said Jack, "that fifty dollars? Will the academy members of our nine be willing for it to go to our gym?"

"We can divvy with 'em, and let 'em have half fer their gym," was Jubal's practical way out of this difficulty.

"That twenty-five would pay off all the debt but fifty dollars," said Jack. "And we could raise the rest before the summer is over."

"We could do that dead easy," said Skeen. "We could get up some kind of a drawing game right here in Cranford and do that."

"What do you say, Lafe?" Jack asked, for Lafe had been silent.

"Oh, any way suits me; but as for being defeated by the Cardiff nine, that wouldn't be any disgrace. They're hardly in our class, you know; and being beat by them wouldn't trouble me any."

As an answer was demanded at once, Jack and the other boys hustled out through the town, summoning members of the nine to the gym for a meeting which should settle the matter.

Brodie and Phil came down to that meeting, and so did Tom Lightfoot, Wilson Crane and about all the others.

Then the vote was taken—after a hot discussion, in which it was decided that this acceptance and the game would not be a violation of the rules applying to amateur nines—and Jack hurried a message to the telegraph office.

It read thus:

"Offer accepted. Will play you in Cardiff, Saturday.  
JACK LIGHTFOOT."

### CHAPTER IV.

#### JUBAL AND REEL.

It was while the other boys were drumming up the absent members that Jubal hastened to the academy boathouse, having said he would go down by the lake and see if any members of the nine were there.

He did expect to keep an eye out for members of



the nine, but chiefly he intended to look for Reel Snodgrass.

He found Reel, with Delancy, at the boathouse.

"Goin' to Cardiff, Sat'day?" he asked, a good-humored smile on his homely face.

"I don't know," said Reel, eying him suspiciously, and expecting to hear something about the scared dog.

"Better go," said Jubal, "we're goin'—that is the nine is to play the Cardiff nine there Sat'day afternoon."

"You fellows aren't so stuck on yourselves as to think you can go against Cardiff successfully?" cried Reel, with a sneer.

"Well, naow, 'twas Cardiff's doings. They've writ to us tew come, offerin' tew pay expenses and all that. It was that game agin' Highland that done it—that whitewashin', yeou know. They heered abaout that game."

That game was a sore one to both Reel and Delancy, for Delancy had lost some money wagered against Cranford, and other plans which they had put up against Cranford that day had gone awry.

"What are you telling this to us for?" asked Reel, in a tone that would have offended almost anyone but Jubal.

On another occasion it might even have offended him, but Jubal had an ax to grind and could not afford to be sensitive.

"I didn't know but mebbe yeou'd be int'rested, bein' Cranford fellers."

"Is that why you hurried down here so fast?" Reel queried, still wondering if something connected with the collie was not back of this apparent friendliness.

"No, I come daown in a hurry tew see if there was any of the nine here," said Jubal, stretching the truth very hard. "Hain't seen any, have yeou? We're goin' tew have a meetin' at the gym right away, tew decide this question of goin' tew Cardiff Sat'day."

"None of the nine are down here, don't y' know!" said Delancy, regarding Jubal, superciliously.

Delancy felt very much superior to this "ignorant Yankee."

Jubal glanced along the shores of the lake.

"No use goin' further, I reckon."

He sat down by the boathouse door.

"That meetin' won't be fer several minutes," he explained.

He looked at Reel and Delancy gravely. The fact that they were wealthy and he was not, and that they considered themselves very much his betters, troubled

him not at all. In his own estimation, he was as good as anybody, and "mebbe a deal better."

"By hemlock! I'm sorry, gol-darned sorry, that yeou ain't still on aour nine!"

He was looking at Reel.

"I'm not."

The answer was as crisp as pie crust.

"Well, naow I am, and I know other members of the nine that air."

It would have puzzled Jubal to have named even one, but small falsehoods did not trouble him.

"Who are they?" Reel demanded, flushing, for this flattery touched him.

"Well, naow, by granny! I think that even Jack Lightfoot sees that he was too quick that time."

"He hasn't said so?"

"No; but other things than words talk, sometimes."

"Well, I wouldn't go back on the nine if he should get down on his knees and beg me to."

"Bah Jove! we don't care for such a common crowd, don't y' know!" Delancy declared, insolently, breathing smoke from his lungs.

"Oh, that crowd ain't so bad, when yeou come tew know 'em right! They ain't tew good fer me to 'sociate with."

He laughed humorously.

"But what I've been thinkin' abaout, and it's a subject we was talkin' abaout this very mornin', is that if yeou was a member of the nine yeou could work that hypnotin' yeou dew naow and then, and help us tew win games with it."

Reel gave him a keen glance.

"Did Lightfoot say that?"

"I ain't sayin' who said it; but it was said, all right. It would put Cranford on top the heap, yeou know. If yeou worked it on an umpire, f'r instance, or on the opposin' pitcher, it would be great. There's hull wads o' ways it could be worked?"

He glanced at Reel questioningly.

Reel returned the look with interest.

"I've never acknowledged that I know anything about hypnotism."

"Well, I think yeou dew, myself; and everybody says yeou do."

"The nine?"

"They're shore of it."

"It's a lie—I don't know anything about it."

"Well, naow, jist fer fun, what will yeou take tew teach me what yeou do know?"

"I'm not selling what I don't own; and you haven't any money, anyway!"



"Don't be so gol-darned shore abaout that!"

He thrust his hand into his pocket, and drew out some bills and displayed them.

Delancy regarded him with more interest.

"Where did you get that money?" said Reel.

"Where'd I git it? Goshfry, where do yeou s'pose? Worked fer it—sold old rags and old iron, run errands, cut lawns when I had time, and a lot of other things. I was goin' tew bank this to-day, but mebbe if you an' me make a dicker I won't bank the hull of it."

"Got money out at interest, have you?" Delancy sneered. "I wouldn't have thought it, don't y' know."

"Well, I've got a little," Jubal confessed, modestly. "I'm addin' tew it right along, tew. There's a good many things yeou wouldn't think about, I reckon."

"You expect to be rich sometime?" Delancy sneered again.

"Yeou bet I do! I'll be there by an' by, an' don't yeou fergit it."

"What do you want me to do?" asked Reel, eying the money.

Jubal put it away and returned to the attack.

"Well, tew begin with, I'd like to have yeou do some hypnotin' for that game Sat'day. I'd like yeou to hypn'tize somethin' er somebody so's we'll win. Yeou might hypn'tize me, f'r instance, so's I couldn't miss the ball!"

He laughed.

Reel's eyes brightened.

"Jubal," he said, suddenly, "I'll tell you what I'll do! If the nine play Cardiff Saturday——"

"They're goin' tew!"

"You don't know it yet."

"I'm bettin' they do."

"If they do, you come to me at the Clarendon House there just before the game, and I'll do something for you."

"Will yeou, shore?"

"I will, sure."

"Fer haow much?"

"I won't charge you anything."

"What's it tew be?"

"I won't tell you until the time."

"By jacks! I'll be there."

His face was wreathed in a wide grin.

"There's just one proviso."

"Name it."

"You mustn't mention the matter to anyone between now and then. If you do"—he snapped his fingers—"the thing is off."

"Mum's the word," said Jubal. "By granny! I'll be there!"

"Some of the fellows are coming back to the gym," announced Delancy, who had at intervals been peeping round the corner of the boathouse.

Jubal jumped up.

"I've got tew be goin', then."

"Remember, if you speak of this to anyone, it's off!" Reel warned, sharply.

"Mum's the word," said Jubal, as he hurried away.

"What are you—aw—going to do to the fool?" asked Delancy, looking after him.

"Plenty of time to think that out between now and the time of the game."

"He's an awful common sort, don't y' know."

"But better than Jack Lightfoot, for he doesn't pretend to be anything, and little Jackie thinks he's the only leaf on the tree."

"You wōn't—aw—show him anything about hypnotism?"

"I don't know. I may."

"That's a devilish sort of power, don't y' know. I don't want to have anything to do with it. It gives me the creeps, don't y' know, just to think of it."

"Don't think of it, then," snapped Reel.

## CHAPTER V.

### JACK'S TALISMAN.

The boy who doesn't love his mother is—well, there is something decidedly wrong with him. Jack Lightfoot loved his mother. He was very proud of her, too, for this lovable little mother was a very superior sort of woman.

In Jack's eyes she was handsome, though the roses of youth were no longer in her cheeks, and her hair was streaked a bit with gray. She had a soft step and a soft voice.

She had, too, the ability to see things from Jack's standpoint, and so was able to sympathize with him.

Hence, it came about that Jack always talked with his mother about his plans, about his sports, and all the other things that either pleased or troubled him. She knew all about his daydreams also—those dreams of what he hoped to do when he became a full-grown man.

So, of course, she knew all about this invitation from Cardiff almost as soon as the members of the nine, for Jack told her about it when he went home.

Cardiff was a big manufacturing center, where the



wheels of business and trade never seemed to stand still.

Mrs. Lightfoot's voice broke a little when Jack was telling her of the contemplated trip to Cardiff.

Noticing that, he almost expected to see tears spring to her eyes, but he did not.

"Why, you don't object to my going there?" he said.

"No," she answered, "it's not that, even if it is a big place."

To Jack's surprise, she hurriedly quitted the room.

But she was back in a moment, and now she held something in her hand.

"It's not that, Jack," she repeated; "only it made me think of something I try not to think about very much."

Jack looked his astonishment.

"It makes me think of the other big places—of the big world—into which you will be going all too soon to suit me; that's what I mean, Jack. Of course, it will be right for you to go, and to do the things, get the education, and all the other matters we've talked about, and of course you can't understand just how I feel about it. So, don't notice it. But it seems to me I'm losing my boy, or will soon lose him. You're almost a man now—though you'd always be my boy, to me, if you were as big as Goliath; and so it just came to me, like a rush of feeling, that going to Cardiff was just the forerunner of your going to other places, and going out into the great world, where I'll almost lose you."

"Why, I don't like to have you feel that way," said Jack, dropping into a chair and looking at her with moist eyes. "Even when I go out into the world, if I ever do, you won't be losing me."

"But you'll never be so close to me again, Jack; you can't come to me with your stories of the boys' plans and of your own, and all those little things, you know. You'll have to work them all out yourself, without a mother's advice. And it will be weeks and weeks, and maybe months and months, and even years, perhaps, when I shall not be able to see you at all."

There were tears in her eyes, and she stopped to brush them away.

Then she tried to laugh.

"I'm just a foolish woman, Jack, that's all! I'm glad you're going to Cardiff. And, of course, you'll do your best there, as you always do, and if you don't win you'll know you did your utmost, and that's the next best thing to winning; it's better than to win in a way that you'll regret afterward, or in a way that

you can't be proud of. I wish I knew some one there to whom I could give you a letter of introduction, but I don't; so you'll have to go without that. But here——"

She opened the hand that she had held tightly clasped, and to Jack's astonishment he saw shining there a tiny gold locket, with a threadlike chain.

He stared at it.

"I meant to surprise you with it; and I didn't intend to give it to you until your birthday. And that coming birthday is another thing that's been making me think how soon I'll lose my boy! I got this because of the birthday."

She opened the locket; and there he saw, in one side, his mother's picture.

In the other side were these two words, in a wreath of his mother's hair: *Honor, kindness.*

"I'm going to give this to you, to wear in some inner pocket of your clothing."

Jack's eyes filmed just a bit when she placed it in his hand.

"I want you to consider that your *talisman*—the thing that will protect you and bring you good fortune. It will make you think first of your mother, and then of the things that ought to guide your life—honor and kindness. If you are always honorable, and kind whenever it is at all possible to be kind, you have, right at the start, won the very best things you can possess. The other things will come, for you are energetic and ambitious.

"Now, Jack"—she put her arms round him—"I want you to keep this always, to remember your mother by, and your old home by!"

And that "talisman" was in Jack's pocket when he set out for Cardiff with his nine.

## CHAPTER VI.

### DELANCY TAKES A PICTURE.

The talisman was in his pocket also even before he started to Cardiff, being there while he was doing some athletic stunts down at the old fair grounds, near the fair-grounds fence.

Jack was in his baseball suit, and had come down there to do some practice work with his nine, the time being the afternoon before the Cardiff trip.

He was much ahead of the other members that afternoon in time, and began to kick an old football that he had found under the grand stand.

While thus engaged and supposing himself alone,



Jack did not observe Delancy Shelton, who came at that moment along the outside of the fence.

Delancy heard the "thump" of the football, as Jack lifted it with his toe, and looking through the fence he saw Jack.

"Aw," he said, "Lightfoot, don't y' know!—our dear captain of the Cranford nine amusing himself—aw—with an old football!"

Delancy had with him, under his arm, his camera.

As he stood by the fence, looking through, Jack's pose, as he kicked at the ball, attracted his attention.

He unslung the camera, held it in position, by a wide crack in the fence, and then snapped it just as Jack kicked again at the football.

Jack's talisman seemed not be doing its duty that day, for the pose in which Delancy caught Jack was one that could be used for sinister purposes, though at the moment even Delancy did not think of that. His only thought just then was that Jack had made an attractive picture.

No boy, or man, is all good or all bad. So it can be said quite truthfully of Delancy that even he, silly and inane as he was, had some good points. One was that he liked pictures and good pictures.

When he had gone home and developed the pictures on his films he found that the one he had taken of Jack, in the act of kicking the football, was a very good one, indeed.

He showed it to Reel, and was criticised and sneered at.

"I couldn't look at the fellow twice," said Reel.

"I'll look at anything that makes a good picture," Delancy answered, sharply, for sometimes Reel's dictatorial tones became irritating to him.

The thought of this picture returned like a flash to Reel Snodgrass, the next forenoon at Cardiff, when a member of the Cardiff baseball nine was brought to the hotel on a window shutter, which served as a stretcher, and it was announced that he had been found in a vacant lot near the Cardiff ball grounds in a condition of unconsciousness, and an examination had shown that he had been kicked heavily in the side and also beaten about the head.

No one knew who did it, nor anything about it; and the unfortunate ball player could not tell himself, for he was unconscious.

Reel Snodgrass became instantly deeply interested in this ball player.

He pushed into the hotel with the crowd that followed the stretcher, and he contrived to be in the room

to which the player was taken when the doctor who had been hastily summoned arrived.

Reel's face had become white and his manner uneasy.

Anyone looking at him might easily have fancied that he was acquainted with something in connection with this singular occurrence, though, as a matter of fact, he had known nothing of it until the player was brought to the hotel.

He listened anxiously for the statement of the doctor.

"Badly hurt," were the words he heard, "and he may not recover. A terrible bruise here, like that of a kick, and I think he has internal injuries as a result of it; besides, these wounds on his head are bad—very bad."

The aroused members of the Cardiff nine began to express their wrath, and to make threats of what they would do if they could discover who the miscreant was.

Reel wanted to hint that it might be Jack Lightfoot.

He feared, however, to go that far without any evidence whatever.

After learning all he could of how and when the attack on the player had been made, he hastened out to the piazza, where Delancy was poised in an easy-chair smoking his inevitable cigarette.

"Come with me!" said Reel, tapping him nervously on the shoulder.

"Why—aw," Delancy drawled, "what the deuce is the hurry?"

"I say come with me, and don't sit there staring."

Delancy rose and followed him.

On the pavement beyond the hotel, well out of ear-shot, Reel took Delancy by the arm, and began to pour forth his idea in a flood of words, as they walked on together.

"You recollect that picture you took of Jack Lightfoot yesterday?"

"And of how you kicked about my taking it, bah Jove! Yes, I'll not forget that."

"Forget that part of it—about my kicking; for it's going to be the greatest thing out, for us."

Delancy took out his cigarette and stared.

"Well," Reel went on, "you saw that ball player brought in, about half killed by some one?"

"I saw that, all right."

"I guess you're stupid, Delancy. Don't you remember showing me the other day your collection of snapshot photographs? There was one in it of a ball player lying flat on the ground, where he had fallen. You'll



remember the picture makes him look as if he was unconscious or dead."

Delancy began to see something of what Reel was driving at.

"Aw—but——"

"Now, couldn't you," Reel drove on, "couldn't you take those two pictures and combine 'em, and make a new one out of them, showing Jack Lightfoot kicking a ball player?"

Delancy caught his breath, the thing was so daring.

"And then what?"

"Well, we could get that new picture into the hands of the Cardiff police just before the time for the game this afternoon, and Jack would be arrested. That would take him out of the game. Even if he wasn't held finally it would take him out of the game."

"Aw—don't y' know, that would——"

"That would put the Cranford nine in a hole!" said Reel, smiting the edge of his right hand into the open palm of his left. "Don't you see?"

His gray eyes glittered and his face grew red.

As a general thing it had a deep, thick coat of tan, through which apparently nothing could penetrate, but the hot blood showed in his cheeks now.

"And don't you see, Delancy, that would make it safe for you to take that bet? You've been afraid to."

"I got caught that other time," said Delancy, but his pale blue eyes began to take on some fire. "I lost over five hundred, don't y' know."

"I tried to help you out in that!"

"And failed."

"Yes, I failed. But this is a good chance. I think you can recoup, you see—get back that money with this trick."

"The substitute pitcher will go in," Delancy objected.

"I know that, of course; but Phil Kirtland is no such pitcher as Jack Lightfoot, much as he wants to think so. Phil Kirtland wouldn't have the ghost of a show before such batters as they have on the Cardiff nine. Those fellows from Cranford who wanted to bet with you are counting on Jack pitching. They needn't know that he won't until the game is ready to begin, and before that time you can have the bet cinched."

The temptation grew more alluring to Delancy the more he thought of it.

He took out his watch.

"Say, I've got just time to catch that train for Cranford!"

"I know it. Get that train, fix up the fake photo-

graph at home, and get back here with it; and then we'll arrange things. Scat—hurry!"

Delancy had yielded again to the stronger will.

He started at a swift pace for the station, then hailed a cab, resolved not to miss the train.

And Reel Snodgrass, having set his plan at work, went again to the hotel, to make inquiries about the injured ball player.

He found some members of the Cardiff nine on the piazza steps, and approached them on the subject.

"He's still unconscious," was the answer, "and we don't know if he'll ever come out of it, so's to be able to tell who kicked him. The doctor won't say much, but poor Bill's in a bad way. If we could get our hands on the chap that did it there'd be a lynching bee."

This speaker was wrathful and spoke his hot words straight out from a hot heart.

"Gee! we're digging a pit for little Jackie Lightfoot!" was Reel's thought. "But all I want is to have him arrested right at the opening of the game and dragged from the diamond. That will knock the Cranford nine all to pieces; there won't any of 'em be able to play for a cent after that. Lafe will be so anxious that he can't catch, and the others will be right on pins and needles. I'll put a little money into that wager myself, if we can work this thing. And I think we can."

Meanwhile, Delancy had caught the train and was speeding back to Cranford.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE WAGER.

An hour or more before the time for the ball game to be called in Cardiff, Jerry Mulligan, the Irish carter from Cranford, came roaring round the Cardiff hotel where Delancy Shelton and Reel Snodgrass were stopping.

Jerry was feeling particularly jolly, and had a roll of greenbacks tucked in his pocket.

In his own estimation, Jerry was no longer a cart driver, but a millionaire with money to burn, and he seemed anxious to burn it.

"Whurroo!" he squalled. "Oi'm lookin' fer Mis-ther Shnodgrass an' Misther Shelton, bedad!"

This he announced in a loud voice to the hotel clerk.

"Where air they, bedad? Oi'm wantin' to see 'um. Oi've collected the funds, so I have, an' here 'tis." He took out the roll and waved it in the air. "Three hundred dollars, d'ye moind, an' the man that says the



Cranford nine can't play ball git's ut! They was sayin' ut, begobs, an' I'm lookin' fer 'um."

"I don't think they're in," said the clerk, eying that roll enviously. "So, you think the Cranford boys have a good chance?"

"A good chanct?" howled Jerry. "They're the sthoof!"

Then he stepped out into the street, saying that he would be back in a little while.

Delancy had returned a few minutes before and was in his room upstairs with Reel, where he was showing the photograph he had made by combining two others.

Both he and Reel heard the wild boasts of the red-faced Irish lad from Cranford, but they wanted to talk a bit before descending to meet him.

Reel was looking with great interest at the new photograph.

"Delancy, you're a peach!" he cried. "That's great!"

As a work of photographic cleverness it was very good. For Delancy, taking the two photographs already mentioned, had produced from them one which showed Jack Lightfoot kicking a football player who was lying prone and apparently senseless on the ground.

The player's face was not visible, but his form was clearly outlined.

As for the picture of Jack with foot uplifted delivering the kick—the football kick, mind you—that was as clear as day, and anyone could have recognized Jack at a glance.

"It's really better than I expected to see it," said Reel. "Oh, this will do the trick, all right! Now, the plan is to have this put in the hands of the police just in time for them to come to the ball grounds as the game is about to begin and snake Jack off to jail. That will throw the Cranford nine into fits, and they'll lose the game. Oh, it's a cinch!"

Delancy and Reel were now ready to meet Jerry Mulligan, or anyone else who had money to wager on Cranford.

Opening the window, they motioned to Jerry, who was out in the street by the side of the hotel.

"Whurroo!" he yelled, as soon as he saw them; and he struck a rainbow gait for the hotel door.

Soon they heard his heavy boots thumping on the stairs.

Reel went out into the hall to welcome him, and conducted him into the room.

"Begobs, where hov' yeez been kapin' yer delicate faytures?" cried the Irish lad. "Oi've been lookin' the

town over fer yeez. The clark av this shebeen towlt me ye worn't in."

He dug down into his pocket and produced the roll.

"There she is," he cried, slipping the bills through his fingers. "Three hunderd dollars, an' ivery cint av it to go up an Cranford."

Reel laughed at Jerry's eagerness to part with so much good money.

"Aw, where did you get it?" queried Delancy, superciliously, sitting on the window ledge and puffing his cigarette.

Jerry looked at him indignantly.

"This is Cranford money, d'ye mind—ivery cint av it! 'Twas give to me by a lot o' the b'ys to bet an this game. Some av it's mine, and I wish thot more av it was. I've got tin dollars and fifty cints in this pot, and I wish it was tin hunderd, so Oi do. Now, yeez fellys put up or shut up! Ye've been sayin' things that makes me blood hot. Put up or shut up!"

"Is it good money?" asked Delancy, with a palpable sneer.

"Is ut good money? Hear the giraffe talkin'? Do Oi look loike a counterfeiter? It's betther money than ye can put agin' it. Do ye moind that, now! This is money colliected from har-rd worrukin' mill hands and har-d worrukin' min ginerally, and av that don't make it good money I want to know ut. Ut's good money, an' I want to smack yeez in the jaw fer hintin' that maybe 'tain't."

"Aw, I didn't know!" said Delancy, in that tantalizing tone.

"Looky here, Mистер Shelton! This money"—he waved the bills—"wasn't made by grindin' down the poor, as Oi've no doubt yours was."

"The poor wouldn't be so poor if they'd be more careful of their money," was Delancy's shot. "But I'll go you! What's the odds?"

"Five to three, ye was offerin'! Five hunderd agin' this three hundred. If Cardiff wins ye take the pot, an' if Cranford wins the whole av ut's mine, d'ye un-derstand?"

Delancy pulled out a roll and peeled off some bills.

"Who's to be stakeholder?" asked Reel.

"The clark av the hotel, begobs! We'll have him put ut in his safe till afther the game."

Then all went downstairs, where they found the clerk alone; and, after explaining to him the terms of this wager, he wrapped it in paper and stowed it away in the hotel safe.

Having consummated this, Jerry reeled hilariously



and happily out into the bright sunshine of the street, and Reel and Delancy, following him shortly, took their way toward the Cardiff ball grounds.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### AT THE FAIR.

This last day of the Cardiff Fair was a great day, indeed, to judge by the crowds that poured out to the grounds.

As the hour for the balloon ascension drew on, the entire population of the city seemed to empty itself in that direction.

Cardiff was filled with countrymen, too, for the fair had been a strong attraction to the rural communities.

Jack Lightfoot and his nine and friends had gone early to the grounds. They were in Cardiff to enjoy themselves, as well as to play ball.

The Cranford girls, Kate Strawn and Nellie Conner, had joined the boys at the hotel and walked with them down to the grounds, as delighted with the sights and sounds of Cardiff as the boys themselves.

"If you don't win to-day," said Nellie, "you——"

"If we don't win!" cried Jack, in a mocking voice. "Why, the idea! Of course we'll win."

Yet Jack was not so sure of it. In truth, he was now rather reluctant to enter into this game with Cardiff.

The lure which Cardiff had set before the Cranford nine had been particularly attractive, and because of that Jack and his friends had accepted. But, from the first, Jack knew that the nine would have to meet one of the strongest teams in that part of the State.

The Cardiff nine belonged to a large league; and Jack discovered, after his arrival in Cardiff, that the reason Cranford had been challenged was because no nine from the larger cities could be had to play against Cardiff that day.

The Cardiff boys anticipated an easy walk-over, even though they were ready to acknowledge that in the small Four-Town League to which Cranford belonged the Cranfords had done some phenomenal work for a young nine of amateurs.

But defeat Cardiff! Why, in their opinion, that could not be done by Cranford. There would be some lively ball playing, they were willing to admit, that would furnish sport and amusement for the spectators, and that was all they wanted. The victory, of course, was as good as cinched.

Knowing all this, and understanding the odds

against his nine, Jack was not in so jovial a mood as he seemed.

He pretended to be very light-hearted and gay, pretended not to be thinking of the game at all, but it was in his mind every minute. He could not get away from it, nor from the feeling that in going against Cardiff his nine was walking almost to certain defeat.

The other members of the nine seemed not to think defeat by Cardiff would be such a terrible thing; yet it would be distressing to Jack.

He knew that Jerry Mulligan and some other of his strong partisans were foolishly trying to make bets on Cranford. Jack did not think they would succeed, unless at unheard-of odds. So he did not trouble so much about that, though he had cautioned Jerry. He might as well have cautioned a windmill in a high breeze.

If Jack had been alone he probably would have gone into a blue funk. But being with friends, and so forced to keep up an outward gayety, the effort reacted on him and made him feel better.

Still, his serious forebodings did not leave him.

The fair grounds were already filled with people when Jack and his friends got down there.

Crowds were swarming here and there, looking at the displays of fine stock and agricultural machinery, and at the shows that had everywhere blossomed forth, where loud-voiced "barkers" appealed to the people to spend their money in seeing the wonders hidden under the tents.

Flags were flying and bands were playing. It was a bright, joyous day. Even the sunshine seemed to smile in approval. The Cranford crowd was in a jolly mood, and Lafe Lampton simply loaded his pockets with peanuts.

The principal crowd was moving in the direction of the place where the balloon was to make its ascension. An aeronaut had been hired to go up in his balloon and leap from a parachute when high in the air. It was called, in the advertising bills, "A high dive from the clouds!" And there were alluring pictures of the aeronaut in tights and spangles shooting downward out of the sky in an umbrella-looking thing, while the balloon was soaring on upward.

Jack and his friends had seen other pictures, before entering the grounds—pictures on the fences and walls of baseball boys tearing round a diamond.

They had talked and laughed over these; and had named certain figures in the pictures for Jack, and Lafe, and the other members of the nine.



One of them, which they called Ned Skeen, was falling down on himself while trying to get a batted ball.

"The balloon is over that way," said Kate, tugging at Nellie's arm. "I don't want to miss that. We can see baseball at home."

"Not as good as you'll see here," said her brother Brodie.

"Oh, yes, quite as good!"

"Then we're going to win this afternoon?"

"Of course you are. Haven't I got the mascot with me?"

The mascot was trotting on before, sometimes dodging back to get out of the way of hurrying feet, and he was a wonderful dog to behold, strung with fluttering ribbons, and wearing a sash emblazoned with the word, "CRANFORD."

He had forgotten about the cat hid in the rabbit skin, and his friends knew nothing of it. So he was now a very bold and proud dog, indeed, and seemed worthy to be the mascot of the nine.

When they arrived at the balloon grounds, situated near the diamond, they found the crowd thick there.

Nevertheless, they pushed their way through, until they were close up to the balloon.

"By granny, I'd like tew take a ride in that thing!" said Jubal. "I've tuck rides in abaout everything else. Wonder haow it feels to go shootin' up into the sky in that?"

"I'm wondering how it would feel to come shooting down!" said Nellie.

"I think I'd as soon stay on the ground," remarked Tom Lightfoot. "In a first-class balloon, now, it would be different; but these flimsy things—why, a man takes his life in his hands every time he goes up in one."

"Why do they do it, then?"

"For money."

"A feller will do 'most anything fer money," said Jubal. "I'd go up myself and resk gittin' daown, if the stakes was big enough!"

"What wouldn't you do for money, Jube?" Nellie asked.

"Nothin', by granny; there ain't nothin' I wouldn't dew, if there was enough money in it—that is, nothin' that was straight aout honest."

Jubal was so much in earnest that Nellie laughed.

The aëronaut arrived in his spangles and tights, with an old coat drawn round him, which somewhat spoiled the effect of his glittering apparel.

The balloon was already being inflated, and a crowd of men and boys were gathered about it, hanging to the ropes and to the bulging envelope, to assist the ground anchor in holding it down until the appointed time.

The aëronaut, a brisk young man, walked round, inspecting it.

The crowd watched him intently while he looked the balloon over and examined the basket attached to it. He also inspected the parachute, which was slung at one side of the bulging canvas.

Looking at the folded parachute, Jack saw that in general appearance it was like a large, closed umbrella, and that it was hung to the netting that inclosed the balloon, being attached by a knotted cord which trailed down an end into the car.

As a usual thing, there is no basket attached to the balloon used by these parachute sky travelers, but for a novelty this performer had one attached, possibly for certain purposes connected with his daring stunt.

The news that the aëronaut had arrived and that the ascent would soon be made caused a great increase of the crowd.

From all over the fair grounds people were now pouring to this spot.

There could be no doubt that the advertised balloon ascension had been a big drawing card.

"Stand back!" the aëronaut kept commanding, as the excited people continued to crowd toward the balloon. "And keep clear of the ropes!"

Jack and his friends stood back in obedience to these orders, but others no sooner retreated a few feet than they closed in again.

Then a couple of policemen appeared, and by walking round the swelling balloon they pushed back, with their clubs, whoever tried to get too near.

"Stand back!" they cried. "And keep out of the ropes! If this thing should tear loose where would you be, if you got tangled in a rope?"

But even this awful threat did not move the people, and they closed in as fast as they were driven back, some even laughing at the policemen and jumping close up to the balloon as soon as the officers had gone forward a little.

When the balloon bag filled, it lifted itself, and dragged the basket along, until, going still higher on the straining ropes, it stood up in air with the basket on the ground below.

Then a woman made her appearance, bearing a small child—a little girl.

She spoke smilingly to the aëronaut, and the word



went flying round that she was his wife and that the little girl was their child.

She said something to him, at the same time laughing; and he nodded his head.

Then he picked up the child, and hopping agilely to the basket set the child in it.

"Oh!" cried Nellie, clapping her hands to her ears as if to shut out some awful sound. "What if the balloon should get away?"

The child laughed and danced in the basket.

After a little the man bent forward for the purpose of lifting her out.

The policemen seemed to have forgotten their duty in watching this little drama, and everybody was pushing forward again.

Then there was a sudden loud snapping and cracking as the rope—the main rope attached to the ground cable—broke with a loud report.

This was followed by a wild scream from the crowd, as the balloon rose, dragging the men and boys who held onto it.

Most of these, as the balloon pulled, let go the ropes, either in fear or because they thought the time had come to let them go.

Seeing the peril of the child, the aëronaut leaped for the ascending basket, but caught his foot in the ground rope and was thrown headlong.

Then a form in baseball suit flashed through the air with the wild spring of a circus athlete.

"It's Tom—Tom!" screamed Nellie Conner, clasping her hands.

The balloon shot above the heads of the people, as the aëronaut tried to get on his feet and grasp the car.

Then it leaped skyward.

And there was Tom Lightfoot!

In his wild dive to save the child he had reached the basket.

As the runaway balloon thus broke loose from its moorings, and soared aloft, Tom Lightfoot was seen to clamber over the side of the swaying basket.

A wild roar had broken forth, in the midst of which could be heard the heart-piercing scream of the distracted mother.

The balloon rose almost like a rocket, shooting above the crowd with great velocity.

Tom Lightfoot was himself a most astonished and almost frightened youth, as he found himself thus lifted skyward.

He had never dreamed of taking an aërial journey, nor had he a desire to do so, like Jubal.

He had only acted on the natural impulse of a kind heart, when he saw the peril of the child.

Tom had hoped to get to her and lift her out of the basket, as her father had intended doing.

The rest had followed naturally. He had reached and seized the basket, and it had lifted him from the ground. Almost before he knew it he was in the air, where a drop would have been perilous and even suicidal, and there was nothing to do but go ahead and see this singular adventure through to the end.

Even in the midst of his excitement he did not forget the child for whom he had taken that risk.

She had been thrown to the bottom of the basket by the upward swing, and she was now frightened and crying.

She was a beautiful little girl, with large, blue eyes; but they were now filled with tears, which began to stream down over her face.

"Don't cry, little girl!" said Tom, dropping to the bottom of the basket and hanging on for dear life.

He was startled and alarmed. He would have been very much frightened but for the pressing need to do something which now moved him.

"Don't cry, little girl!" he said again, and put his arm about her, drawing her close to him.

He ventured to look over. The sight was enough to upset the nerves of anyone not accustomed to ballooning. He seemed to be already at a tremendous height above the fair grounds.

There was no apparent motion of the balloon. The ground seemed simply to be falling away from him at sickening speed.

A great roar was rising from the startled and horrified crowd, and the people seemed to be moving and stirring, as if some great paddle had been pushed down from the sky and was stirring them up as a cook stirs the contents of a great caldron. He could think of nothing else which the sight resembled.

Merely to look down made him faint and dizzy, as it does many people to look from a height. But what was looking from the top of a church steeple, or some tall monument, or cliff, to this?

He was high above the tree tops now, above the church steeples, above everything.

From that high viewpoint the city of Cardiff seemed to be built of pygmy houses, the streets were like little lanes, with dogs, instead of horses, attached to toy wagons. He could hardly believe those little things were horses, and that those antlike creatures in the streets were men.



The breeze was swinging the balloon off over the fair grounds and over the town.

He saw the people running and a great crowd pouring through the fair-ground gates.

Then the necessity of trying to do something came to him again.

The child stared about and began to cry loudly.

"We—we can't get down!" she wailed.

"Well, perhaps we can; and, perhaps, the balloon will go down itself in a little while. Are you the balloonist's little girl?"

"Ye—yes!" she sobbed.

"Well, he always came down, when he went up. Everything that goes up must come down."

He smiled and tried to laugh; but he didn't feel like laughing.

The balloon seemed not to be rising so fast now. Tom ventured at intervals to look over the side of the basket.

In a little while the balloon passed to the other side of the town.

Before him he saw woodland. The ground looked almost level, yet he knew it was cut with hills. The roads seemed threads of white and gray.

Then, still rising and striking a counter current of air, the balloon was swung back toward and over the town.

"We're going back toward the fair grounds," said Tom, when he observed this. "That's good, isn't it? It will take us right back where we came from."

The child seemed to be cheered somewhat by that.

And indeed it did seem even to Tom that the balloon was drifting toward the fair grounds. At any rate, it was moving back across the city, in a higher current of air.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE FALL OF THE PARACHUTE.

As the balloon thus swung across the town of Car-diff and drew again near to the fair grounds, Tom Lightfoot was given as great a fright as he had ever received in his life.

He heard a tearing sound somewhere in the balloon envelope over his head.

The pressure on the envelope, which had been used a long time and was not in the best condition, was too much, and some weak seam was ripping.

He heard it again—that tearing sound—as he looked up at the big bag.

His heart went into his mouth, as he saw one of the seams of the bag slowly opening.

He sprang to his feet then, holding by the ropes, and stared with blanching face at that ominous rip.

A cross seam, where a patched place showed, stopped for a time the tearing, but there could be no telling when the whole balloon would rip asunder and he and the child be flung to the ground, more than a thousand feet below.

Tom Lightfoot was a youth possessed of rare courage, but his heart was hammering in his throat now and he seemed on the point of suffocating, while that horrible fear of being hurled to death oppressed him.

For a few seconds he was dizzy. His head seemed to spin round like a top.

Then he recovered control over himself.

He remembered the parachute—in fact, it had been in his mind a good deal, though he had not thought of venturing on anything so startling or perilous as a plunge from the balloon in it.

Now he began to see that if he escaped from the balloon with his life it must be by means of that same parachute.

And he had not a second to lose, for at any instant the balloon might rip itself open and shoot him and the child into space.

While studying the balloon and the parachute on the ground, Tom had noticed how the latter was attached to the upper ropes by a knotted cord, the end of which hung down now, swaying within reach of his hand, while the parachute itself hung against the side of the bag.

There was a tiny basket, large enough for the aeronaut to set his feet in, at the bottom of the parachute.

"If I could put her in that!" he gasped.

Without further ado he caught the child up in his arms, as another tearing sound came from the balloon bag, showing that the process of ripping had started again.

The child squirmed and wanted to be set down.

"I'm going to put you in that little nest right there!" he cried.

He swung out perilously over the basket, caught the lower tip of the parachute, and drew it in.

He placed the child in it, with a rope about her waist; and then swung in himself, standing in it above her, with a foot on each side of her.

This tipped the balloon frightfully, apparently increasing his already terrible danger.

There was a prayer on the lips and in the heart of



honest Tom Lightfoot, as he took this dangerous, yet necessary, step.

The parachute bumped once against the side of the balloon bag, and then hung suspended, as the balloon tipped still more.

Tom fumbled at the cord which held the parachute.

There was again a loud cracking above, and to his horror he saw the rent in the balloon bag opening swiftly.

The bag began to collapse, and he had a feeling that already the balloon was falling.

Then with wild and desperate energy, and with that prayer for help thundering in his very soul, he tore nervously at the cord that held the parachute.

The cord was knotted, ready for this act, and the slipknot came loose as he jerked.

And then—Tom's heart seemed to stop its beating and his sight blurred, while his breath seemed to be sucked suddenly away from his pinched nostrils.

He had torn the parachute from the ripping balloon, and it was falling—falling—falling!

Tom choked with the very thought of that awful drop through space, a drop so swift that he could not breathe, a drop so wild that made him blind and giddy.

Suddenly, with a loud, snapping and cracking, the parachute swooped open, like a big umbrella.

The terrible descent, which was like the fall of the stick of a rocket, was checked. The parachute had opened, when it seemed to Tom it would never do its duty.

He had fallen but a hundred feet, yet to him the distance had appeared much greater, the time had seemed so long!

Have you never jumped from a beam over a hay-mow, and been startled to find how much longer it took you to reach the hay below than you had thought it would? Or, made such a jump into the water from a diving pier or cliff? If you have had such an experience, you will be able to realize in some small degree how it felt to Tom Lightfoot to drop like a stone through that hundred feet of space high in the air over the fair grounds.

It was a horrifying experience, such as people have claimed sometimes turns the hair gray.

The child was in the tiny little car at Tom's feet, and the car seemed no more than big enough to hold her. He was standing up, clinging desperately to the ropes.

But he could breathe again, and his reeling brain cleared when the swift descent of the parachute slowed down.

It seemed to him, afterward, that if that wild drop had lasted for a brief time longer he should have lost consciousness and fallen.

Now his breath and his strength, his clarity of mind and his hard common sense, came back to him.

As the descent of the parachute became even more gentle, the people and the buildings, and the ground below him, appeared to be floating up to him, rising something like a swift tide.

The vast area of houses and land, of streets and country roads, had marvelously contracted, while the people and buildings below him grew larger, and rose apparently through the clear air to meet him.

Then he could plainly hear the people cheering.

He saw flags waving, and the shouting of the multitude was like the roar of the sea.

Then—it was like a welcome back to happiness—he heard the band playing. It had started up its music to cheer the shouting people.

Tom stooped in the tiny basket of the swaying parachute. He could not kneel down in it, and could only squat, or bend, over the child.

"We're coming down all right now," he said, and his voice trembled. "We'll soon be down to your papa and mamma."

The parachute dipped and floated still lower, jerking along with a swaying motion.

The outer fair-ground fence was just beneath, and he had already passed over the cheering crowd.

Behind him now was that roar of many voices, and Tom saw the excited crowd running after him.

Then he saw something else, and it gave him a start.

It was the balloon itself, falling like a rocket out of the sky.

Relieved of the weight of himself and the child, the balloon had shot up again for a short distance; until, all the sustaining power having gone out of it, the whole had toppled over and fallen like a broken-winged bird.

Tom shuddered as he beheld it shooting downward.

What if he were still in that balloon basket? What if there had been no parachute, or he had not been able to use it in time?

The very suggestion made him tremble.

He saw the balloon and basket strike within the fair-ground fence and saw the people running toward it.

Then the parachute shot on over the fence, but still falling; and, looking again, Tom saw, in the forefront of the crowd that was running like mad toward him, some boys in baseball uniforms.



They were the Cranford boys.

Then the fence hid even these from sight; and after a few gentle, bobbing movements the parachute struck the ground, tilted over and began to drag along; but Tom was out of it, and lifting the child out.

The parachute collapsed and fell over on the grass, just as the baseball boys, with Jack at their head, came pouring through a gate in the fence, running toward Tom.

"Hooray!" they yelled, wildly.

Then Tom was surrounded by them; and the little girl was again crying, while at the same time she tried to laugh and to feel that she had escaped something dreadful.

As for Tom, he knew that he had made the most miraculous and marvelous escape of his life.

He put his arms round Jack's neck, and tears came into his eyes, as he felt himself hugged close up to Jack's exultant body and heard the Cranford boys cheering.

## CHAPTER X.

### JUBAL BECOMES A VICTIM.

The ball game did not take place for more than an hour after that, though it had been scheduled for its beginning immediately after the balloon ascension. But affairs do not shape themselves readily according to program, after such an event as had occurred that afternoon.

Tom Lightfoot and the baseball boys found themselves surrounded in a few minutes by a clamorous crowd, through which came the aëronaut and his wife.

Even the fallen balloon in the fair grounds could not keep the crowd within the grounds, nor could the fear that they would lose what they had paid for admission; they streamed out through the gate. The surging crowd broke it down; and after that it was so impossible to tell who had paid admission and who had not that the fair officials threw the gates of the grounds wide open and permitted all to enter.

The woman and her husband cried over the girl, and the aëronaut took Tom by the hand and shook it until it seemed that he would pump Tom's arm off.

His voice was choked and his face white, showing the mental anguish he had passed through.

"You're the pluckiest boy, and the most quick-witted and clear-headed, that I ever saw!" he cried, while he was performing that pumping.

Tom wondered what the aëronaut would say if he knew how scared he had been, and how blind and

dizzy he had felt when the parachute made its awful drop. And he reflected that the drop which had been so terrifying to him was as nothing to this man, who had made it many times, and was ready to make it again any day for a small money consideration.

Everybody else was declaring how much of a hero Tom Lightfoot was, until, if Tom had not been level-headed, he might have felt puffed up over the performance of the afternoon.

Tom was not conceited. He had escaped in the most wonderful manner, it seemed to him; and he would not have gone through the same experience again for all the money in the Cranford bank.

He said so quite frankly to the Cranford boys, who crowded about him, glorying in his good fortune and his courage.

Delancy Shelton and Reel Snodgrass heard the comments of the crowd.

They, too, had drawn near, to see the one who had made that wild parachute drop.

But they did not come forward with their congratulations.

"There's only one thing I'm glad about in that," said Reel, "and that is that it wasn't Jack who did it. He's so stuck up now that he would have been insufferable, if he had done that."

"Aw, don't y' know," said Delancy, sucking at his everlasting cigarette, "that was—aw—really a great thing!"

"Simply blind luck!" said Reel.

"It wasn't—aw—blind luck that made him pull the parachute loose when the balloon went to pieces."

And this appeared to be so true that Reel was silenced.

Out by the fence they came upon Jubal Marlin, who was telling a crowd of listening strangers what a wonderful youth Tom Lightfoot was, anyway, on general principles. According to loyal Jubal, Tom was the most marvelous boy ever born, with possibly the exception of his cousin Jack.

As soon as they could get Jubal away from this gaping crowd, Reel asked him why he had not come up to the hotel, as he had agreed.

"I waited for you up there quite a while," said Reel.

Jubal grinned in his wide-mouthed fashion.

"By granny, I hain't had time," was the answer.

"Come out there by the fence—over there where there isn't anybody—and we'll talk about that."

"Abaout that hypnotin', yeou mean?"

"Yes."



Jubal grinned again.

For a second he hesitated. Then he walked aside with Reel Snodgrass.

"What is it yeou're goin' tew do?" Jubal asked, when he and Reel were out where he was sure they were unobserved.

"You wanted me to do some hypnotizing so that your crowd would win the game."

"But I've been thinkin' that over," objected Jubal, "and I don't reckon I want yeou tew hypnotize me. Tom Lightfoot says that if the feller that done the hypnotin' was fixed so's he couldn't take the spell off, the feller that was hypn'tized might never come aout of it. By hemlock, I don't want to run the resk of goin' raound hypn'tized all the rest of my life."

"Tom Lightfoot's a fool!"

"No, he ain't, by gravy; he's abaout the keenest feller in all Cranford, and he knows a lot."

"He doesn't know anything about this."

"And yeou told me that yeou didn't."

"Well, I don't know much, but I can show you a few things. And I don't intend to hypnotize you, but to show you how you can put a spell on some of the other players so that they'll do what you want them to."

This was the thing that Jubal craved, some knowledge of the secrets of hypnotizing. That appealed to him.

"A feller might make money sellin' this, I reckon?"

"Sure!" said Reel. "I've made money at it myself."

"Then I'll go yeou. Show me haow some of it's done."

Reel took out the little disk-shaped object, like a bright coin, which was fixed to the end of a handle, so that it could be whirled rapidly, and set it to whirling.

"Now, this thing is what you use. I'll lend it to you. You get the fellow you want to put into a trance, or whatever you may call it, to look steadily at that, and you whirl it just that way; and by and by he'll do what you want him to, and at the same time you can make it seem to other people that he isn't under any spell at all.

"I'll tell you how I came to know about this. It was in India. You know I was brought up there by a Hindoo magician and hypnotist. He taught me every-thing I know about it."

Reel was talking, apparently telling the story of his life in India and explaining to Jubal how he could use this power in the ball game.

He talked rapidly in a low voice, as if for the pur-

pose of keeping anyone who might chance to be near from hearing him.

And Jubal was so much interested, believing that here he was getting some valuable secret, that before Jubal guessed or dreamed what Reel was up to that strange, sleepy feeling which he could not shake off had come upon him, and then Reel had him.

After a little, and a keen look into Jubal's now staring eye, Reel snapped his fingers.

Jubal seemed to be asleep, sitting there with his eyes wide open.

"When that ball comes toward you it will look larger than any football and if you don't get out of the way of it it will hit you.

"And when you're fielding, it will not only be very big but it will come so swift that you can't hold it, and be so heavy that you can't throw it to do any good."

Then he snapped his fingers again.

"And when you come out of this you'll not remember anything about it, except that I told you some things about hypnotism which you're going to try sometime."

Then he snapped his fingers again sharply, in a different way, clapped his hands smartly together, and Jubal's manner changed.

"By granny, yeou don't seem to be explainin' that clear," he said, looking foolish, for he felt that he had been half asleep, but had roused and was now wide awake.

"That's all I can tell you this time," said Reel, dropping the disk into his own pocket. "The game's going to begin now, and you'd better hurry."

And Jubal, feeling that somehow he had been fooled, yet not knowing how, and not at all knowing that he had been put under any sort of spell, left the place and hurried toward the diamond.

## CHAPTER XI.

### JUBAL AND REX.

The game was on.

Jack Lightfoot had pulled his courage together. Tom at first had thought that he was too nervous to play, but as the time went by he felt better, and in response to Jack's urging announced that he would go into the game. All the boys of the nine had been made somewhat shaky by the balloon incident.

Yet Jack's talk with them had not only aroused in them a determination to play to win, but had elevated Jack's own courage.



It often happens that way. The mere declaration that you can do a thing, and an endeavor to feel that you can, is a great help.

Then the game had opened, with these names in the hands of the umpire for the batting lists. The choice of position had been given to Cranford, and they had gone first to the bat:

## CRANFORD.

Tom Lightfoot, 1st b.  
Brodie Strawn, 2d b.  
Mack Remington, rf.  
Lafe Lampton, c.  
Ned Skeen, ss.  
Phil Kirtland, 3d b.  
Wilson Crane, cf.  
Jubal Marlin, lf.  
Jack Lightfoot, p.

## CARDIFF.

Ray Gilbert, c.  
Tony Lamb, rf.  
John Brown, 1st b.  
Bradford Camp, 2d b.  
Leslie Lee, ss.  
Tige Murphy, p.  
Linn Corbett, 3d b.  
Tom Spencer, lf.  
Cave Clifford, cf.

In the first inning Jack had hit a batter and given him a pass to first; then had struck out one man. Then he had gone wild with his spit ball; and the result of the inning was one run for Cardiff, and nothing but goose eggs for Cranford.

This had not been changed when the third inning opened and Jubal Marlin came first to the bat.

In left field Jubal had been given nothing to do. While sitting in the benches he had seemed unusually quiet, but in the excitement of watching the game his friends had not noticed this.

Now he walked to the bat, not swinging two bats as was his custom, and faced the pitcher without his old-time laugh.

Tige Murphy, the Cardiff pitcher, was a red-faced, bullet-headed chap, whose temper was as warm as his complexion. He was Irish, and, aside from his fiery temper, a good fellow and a good pitcher.

The first he sent across the plate for Jubal was a hot one straight.

Instead of striking at it Jubal jumped back.

The ball had been close in, and Jack and the other boys naturally supposed that Jubal had to jump to keep from being hit, and had no wish to be struck by a ball so swiftly thrown.

But the next ball, which was a wide curve, Jubal jumped from in the same way, when it could be seen that he had no reason for doing so.

"Steady, Jube!" Jack warned.

One strike and one ball had been called, and even the catcher was laughing at the idea of Jubal jumping away from that wide ball.

The next was over the plate, and was slow, but Jubal jumped away from it just the same, and throwing down the bat loudly declaimed against Murphy.

"You're a lobster!"

Murphy fired back at him: "Stand up to the plate; I'm puttin' the balls all right."

"You're throwin' 'em right at me!" Jube declared, hotly. "I appeal to the umpire, by jacks, if he ain't throwin' 'em right at me? An' that ball ain't no ball tew play with, nohaow; it's as big as a bucket."

"You're bughouse!" shouted the Cardiff catcher.

Some of the boys were laughing at Jubal, thinking he was just chaffing; but Jack began to wonder.

He stepped over to Jubal.

"Has Reel been fooling with you?" he demanded.

"Nit, he ain't," said Jubal. "If they'll take a regular baseball and not that thing, and throw it right, I can git it; but I ain't goin' tew be killed by that thing."

In the grand stand two young fellows were laughing heartily.

They were, of course, Reel and Delancy; and they were sitting near the Cranford girls, Kate and Nellie, who were seated with Lily Livingston and her mother, Mrs. Livingston acting as chaperon for the three.

The "mascot" was there in the grand stand close by Kate, and he seemed to be watching the game with as much interest as any person, barking now and then when the Cranford cheer rang out. He fairly glittered in ribbons.

But now the mascot took a funny freak.

He began to whine nervously, and crowded close against Kate.

Then, all at once, with a howl, he leaped from the grand stand and started, with all his ribbons fluttering and with his tail between his legs, for the batters' plate, where stood Jack Lightfoot.

Underneath his coat, securely hidden, Reel had the rabbit skin, having brought it with him from Cranford for the purpose. He had bunched it into shape, making it look somewhat as it did that day down by the boathouse, and then, slyly lifting his coat, had let the dog see it.

No doubt Rex expected a cat to pop again from under that rabbit skin and dig at his eyes. Anyway, it must have been to him so crazy a thing, for a cat to look like a rabbit, that he was thrown once more into a panic.

Jack was talking to Jubal Marlin, when the mascot flashed toward the plate in his fluttering ribbons.

Rex stopped close by Jack, cowering, with tail between his legs, and set up a mournful howl.

A wild roar of yells and laughter swept across the ball grounds.

Many knew that this dog was the "mascot" of the



Cranford nine, and others must have been informed of it by those fluttering ribbons and that wide bit of silk bearing the name of "Cranford."

The dog howled and crouched, and not until Jack had stooped and patted him on the head would be venture to go to the benches.

Wilson Crane tried to conduct him back to the grand stand, where the girls sat in much confusion; but whenever Wilson tried to do that Rex howled again and showed a disposition to run away.

Jack was covered with confusion. He could not understand it, and his rather fair face was as red as fire.

As Jubal faced the next "bucket-sized" ball that came toward him, and jumped away from it again, there was a wild mix in the grand stand, into which Fighting Saul Messenger had leaped, and where he was pounding the face of Reel Snodgrass.

He had been watching Reel all day, hoping for a fight; and as Reel shifted on the seat, laughing, Saul had seen the rabbit skin. That was enough. Jumping to conclusions, he "jumped" Reel with great promptness.

Saul hardly knew whether he was right or wrong in doing this, but that made no difference; he wanted to "hammer" Reel, and here was the opportunity, and he was hammering him good, when an officer appeared and dragged him away.

The grand stand had been thrown into wild excitement; but Saul cared nothing for that; and as the officer led him away, under arrest, he howled exultingly to Jack and the other Cranford boys:

"It was Reel Snodgrass! He had some kind of skin under his coat and scared the dog with it; but I pounded him. He can take that skin now and make sticking plasters for his face. That was worth a fine, all right, all right; and—say—I *know* you fellows are going to win the game!"

What more Fighting Saul bellowed was drowned in the roars of the crowd, for the officer was jerking him along with no kindly motions.

Reel and Delancy were hastily vacating their seats in the grand stand. Reel's face was streaming with blood, for Saul had struck him with all his might; and Delancy was panic-stricken and as white as a sheet.

They were swallowed up in the crowd and were out of sight.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE ONLY WAY TO WIN GAMES.

Jack Lightfoot acted with his customary promptness.

He saw that something was the matter with Jubal, and he suspected the hypnotic tricks of Reel Snodgrass, remembering Jubal's talk in Cranford of his desire to investigate that singular power.

Hence, he promptly laid off Jubal, and put little Nat Kimball in his place in left field.

Then, when Phil Kirtland began to pour out a lot of abuse—for Kirtland didn't like the way Saul had attacked Reel Snodgrass—Jack laid Phil off with equal suddenness, and put the lively Irish boy, Connie Lynch, on third bag.

Phil gasped with astonishment, and began to give Jack a "piece of his mind."

"That's all right, Kirtland," said Jack, his gray-blue eyes flashing ominously. "We're here to play ball, and we're going to win this game, if we can do it! Jubal made a fool of himself, and you're doing the same thing. We won't talk about this now. Some other time."

He walked away, leaving Phil gasping like a fish out of water.

Phil would not have believed that Jack would do that, which only goes to show that he did not understand Jack Lightfoot.

"Are you going to stand that?" he asked of Brodie. "Are you going ahead in the game?"

Brodie hesitated for a moment.

"Yes," he said, to Phil's surprise, "I'll play. I want Cranford to win."

"But she'll never win, with Jack Lightfoot running things as he is now."

"She'll have a better chance if I play," said Brodie, sturdily.

"We're ready," Jack announced to the umpire, who had stopped the play when the dog episode opened up at the plate.

Then the name of Wilson Crane was called; for Wilson followed Jubal, and would now follow Connie Lynch, in the batting list.

But the Cranfords went down and out in that inning, without doing anything; and through the second half of the inning, while Jack was in the pitcher's position, he was not able to put the ball over as he wanted it.

When the fifth inning opened Cardiff had three runs to their credit, and Cranford nothing.



But, in the meantime, Jack had once more got control of himself and of his spit ball.

Brodie Strawn cheered the opening of this fifth inning by whizzing the ball past the ear of Tige Murphy and sending it on as a grass cutter far out into center.

Brodie took two bags on that, and not only set the Cranford fans to cheering, but put new life and courage into the Cranford players.

Mack Remington walked to the plate, his apple-red cheeks on fire with excitement.

Worlds seemed to be resting on Mack's shoulders, as he saw Brodie leading off second for a steal and the pitcher winding up.

Then the ball came in, and Mack lifted those worlds by slamming the ball into right field.

Mack was not a good place hitter. He had tried for center; but, striking a little late, the ball had shot off the bat and gone down into right.

Mack took first, and Brodie secured third without trouble.

Then reliable Lafe Lampton came up, lugging Old Wagon Tongue.

Lafe stood the bat up on end, while the ball was going to the pitcher, and, taking a peanut out of his pocket, he deliberately cracked it open, thrust it into his mouth, and set his jaws to working.

The thing was done deliberately, and for two reasons: He really believed that it made him less nervous and more sure as a batter if he had something to work his jaws on; and he hoped to set the pitcher and catcher to laughing and so affect the quality of their work for the minute he was to occupy the slab.

It had the latter effect. Seeing Lafe crack open and bite that peanut, red-faced Tige Murphy, who had an Irishman's sense of the humorous, lost something of speed in his delivery; and Lafe cracked out a two-bagger through short that brought Brodie home, and put Mack Remington on third and himself on second.

Ned Skeen fanned out, and left them frozen in their positions.

But Connie Lynch, who had been put in Phil Kirtland's place, got a hit that brought Mack home, and put Lafe on third.

Wilson Crane was struck out; and Nat Kimball coming to the bat, Lafe became overanxious, fearing that little Gnat would go out like Crane.

Because of this anxiety Lafe tried to steal from third, a very dangerous thing to try, and getting caught between third and home was tagged by the active third baseman.

But, though the side thus went out, the change in the score card—which read now, Cardiff, three; Cranford, two—put such a hopeful face on matters that Jack's nine felt a great increase in their already growing courage.

Jack, by eliminating Phil Kirtland and Jubal, had thrown out what would, in this game, have proved the weak elements. Jubal was in no condition to play, and Phil had assumed a quarrelsome and dictatorial mood. Jack was, therefore, justified in replacing them, and he showed his good sense and his nerve in doing so.

Now he had a nine which worked together harmoniously.

In spite of Brodie's faults, which were many, he was a good deal of a man. Having seen that Phil was in the wrong, and deciding to stick with Jack, he now cast aside every thought but one—which was a determination to do everything he could to help Cranford to win.

As for the battery—Jack and Lafe—they worked like clockwork together; Lafe giving most of the signals, and watching the field, the runners, and everything else before him, with those sky-blue eyes, which were as keen of vision as the orbs of a hawk.

Several things are needed for a nine to win games in baseball, and Jack had these things now.

First, he had harmony, and a nine that would obey him and work together.

Second, he and his fellows now had a courage that seemed justified, and was increasing. Courage without foundation is of little use; but courage with a good foundation of belief in it is everything.

Third, Jack's men understood their signals to perfection; so that every member of the nine always knew just what play was to be made, what steal was to be



attempted, what kind of a ball was to be delivered to the bat—there was no wild guesswork about anything. The nine was thus made a machine which did the will of the one in control of it and that one was the captain.

With all these things, games may be lost, for there are so many uncertainties in baseball; but the nine that has these things will win more than twice as often as the nine that hasn't them. And the proportion can safely be put even higher than that.

Of course, it is assumed in all this that the nine know how to play ball, and are up in the rules of the game; that they are good batters, runners and fielders, and that the battery is reasonably strong.

All these elements of strength the Cranford nine now had.

They did not have them at the opening of the baseball season; but constant practice under so thorough and conscientious a leader as Jack Lightfoot had given them these things.

In the second half of the fifth inning Jack, having regained control of his erratic and often treacherous spit ball, used it with such effect that not a hit was made by Cardiff. And the courage of his nine went still higher.

There was another thing, to which proper attention has not been given, and that was the "talisman."

Now, of course, the mere wearing of anything, be it locket or whatever it is, will not confer on a boy ability to play ball.

Nothing of the kind is claimed.

But that locket, with his mother's picture in one side, and those words "honor" and "kindness" wreathed in his mother's hair in the other side, did wonders for Jack Lightfoot in this game, now that he began to pull himself and his team together. He had not looked at the locket since reaching Cardiff, but the thought that he had it was enough.

The face of his mother was an inspiration. He knew that at home she was thinking of him and wishing him to win. He had acted honorably, and he had tried to act kindly. Even in his apparent harshness to Phil Kirtland, kindness had been at the bottom of it—kindness to the nine.

Phil in the team, when he was in a quarrelsome mood, was a weakness, and it was a kindness to the nine to eliminate that weakness. Jack had done it very promptly. Phil had not got over being surprised about that yet.

The sixth inning opened, and little Gnat having fanned out, Jack Lightfoot came to the plate and smashed the ball on the nose for a two-bagger, and was brought home by another two-bagger made by his cousin Tom.

Then Brodie, after being nearly struck out by Tige Murphy, hammered the ball to the fair-ground fence, and not only came home himself, but drove Tom ahead of him.

Three runs had been brought in by that bunch of hard and sure batters, and Cranford had at a bound passed Cardiff, to the bewilderment and astonishment of those veteran ball players and the spectators who crowded the ball grounds.

And the score was now five to three in favor of Cranford.

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## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE PLOTTERS.

Out by the end of the bleachers, standing on the ground where the crowd was thinnest, but where they could watch every move of the ball game, were Reel Snodgrass and Delancy Shelton.

Reel had wiped the blood from his face, but his cheek showed a bruise and there was a black semicircle under one eye.

Delancy was smoking his inevitable cigarette.

"Aw—don't y' know, it's deuced queer!" Delancy drawled at intervals.

"Something's miscued somewhere," said Reel, who was apparently very nervous.

They were talking in low tones of the expected arrest of Jack Lightfoot, and could not understand why it had not taken place.

Reel had sent the faked photograph to the police by special post office delivery, thus making sure that it would be taken straight to them as soon as it was dropped into the post office.



He had acted, he thought, with extreme caution. The letter accompanying the photograph showing Jack kicking a ball player had not been written, but made up of pasted words and letters cut from newspapers.

The police ought to have arrived for the purpose of arresting Jack long before this, and Reel and Delancy could not understand why they delayed. The delay made them nervous and uneasy, lest something had revealed who the senders of the letter were.

In the midst of the eighth inning—and in which Cardiff set the fans to roaring by some brilliant work and a double play that pulled two runners over the plate and tied the score—Reel's heart was made to jump by seeing two men in police officers' clothing come upon the diamond and walk up to Jack Lightfoot.

"Ah! they've come for him at last!" gasped Reel, his face flushing.

"Aw, I believe they have, don't y' know!"

"It's time."

"Deuced slow they've been!"

"But they'll take him now, and that will tear the nine to pieces. Lafe will go up in the air like that balloon, and all the rest of them will feel so rocky that they can't do anything."

"Yes, they're going to take him! Bah Jove, they're walking right up to him! I was beginning to think my money was gone again, and that I was a fool, don't y' know, for making that bet."

"But you're safe now—Cranford *can't* win now."

"If I'd lost I'd been in an awful hole, don't y' know. It would make over a thousand dollars lost inside of ten days."

"What's that to you?" said Reel, with a smile.

"Bah Jove, don't y' know, it's a good deal—everything! Father gives me only five hundred a week, don't y' know. I had to borrow money after that other game, and I'd have to do it again if I lost this."

"Oh, but you're all right, Delancy!" whispered Reel, jubilantly, rubbing his hands together. "This will put that nine into an awful flutter."

"They'll take him, y' know, and put him in jail, bah Jove, with that other rascal—with Saul Messenger!"

Reel could almost feel his face ache when the name of Saul Messenger was mentioned.

"I wish they'd have to stay in there together until they'd rot!"

"Bah Jove, you've got a temper, y' know!" said Delancy, with evident admiration.

Then, having dropped his cigarette in his excitement, he fished out another, and scratched a match cleverly on the leg of his trousers.

The officers were speaking to Jack.

He turned from the nine and walked off with the officers.

Reel and Delancy could hardly contain their delight.

"You've got that fool Irishman's three hundred nailed down all right now, Delancy!"

"I have, bah Jove!"

Delancy's weak face and pale blue eyes lighted with satisfaction.

"We'll have a blow-out to-night over this."

"Some high balls. Oh, if we win this time, we'll celebrate, don't y' know! We'll cut a swath to-night in this hot old town of Cardiff."

Then they gasped.

Jack had come back upon the diamond *alone*.

"Where are—are—the officers?" gasped Reel.

"The deuce! Bah Jove, they haven't taken him!"

Cranford had been retired with one run, and already Cardiff had made two, putting Cardiff thus one run in the lead, and but one man of the Cardiff nine was out.

But now, with a smile on his face, Jack wound up, and without using the spit ball, but by alternating his speed and working curves, he struck out two men, and Cardiff went into the field with but that one run ahead.

And why had not Jack Lightfoot been dragged in humiliation and disgrace from the diamond?

That was the question that was troubling Reel and Delancy.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE TALISMAN.

The ninth inning opened with Cranford at the bat, and with this score—Cardiff, seven runs; Cranford, six.



Ned Skeen was at the bat.

As Jack sat in the benches watching Skeen, he took from his pocket the talisman.

"Queer about this!" he said, speaking to Tom in a low tone. "I thought I had it in my pocket all the time, yet it was found on the floor of the post-office lobby. A clerk was standing close by the special delivery box when that special delivery letter went into it, and he saw the fellows who put it in. As they turned to go he heard something rattle on the floor. He thought they had dropped a piece of money, and this is what he found; they had dropped this. They were in a terrible hurry, and he could not find them to give it to them, so he kept it; and when the officers came inquiring about the fellow who sent the special delivery letter he turned it over to them. My name is on the back there, see—engraved in the back; and so the officers brought it to me; and asked me a lot of questions. And——"

"Let me see the photograph," said Tom.

Jack took it out.

That, too, had been left in his hands by the officers—a photograph showing him kicking a prostrate baseball player.

"I suppose they might have arrested me for that," said Jack, looking at the faked photograph, "but for the fact that they'd already discovered who kicked that Cardiff player. He had come to himself and told them who attacked him, and that chap is now under arrest. So they knew it wasn't me; and having some keen men on the force they discovered that this photograph was faked; and the thing they're doing now is to look for the fellow that got it up."

"You know who did it?"

"I"—Jack hesitated—"I think I do."

"That it was Delancy?"

"Well, yes; I saw him leaving the vicinity of the Cranford fair ground, carrying his camera, that afternoon. That is the very suit I wore then, and I was kicking that old football. I can tell the suit by that soiled place there on the leg. You see it. I got that in making a slide in the last game we played with Tidewater."

"Yes, that big slide; I remember it."

Tom looked closely at the photograph.

He knew a good deal about such things—there were not many things studious Tom Lightfoot did not know about.

"Well," he said, "Delancy took the photo he got of you that day, and combined it with another."

He dug a small magnifying glass out of a pocket and held it over the picture.

"There!" he exclaimed. "You can see where the two pictures were joined. But it was a mighty good job. I didn't think Delancy would be equal to that."

"Oh, he's pretty well up in photography. Lily Livingston was showing me one day some very fine pictures he'd taken."

"Now that you know this much," said Tom, thoughtfully, passing back the photograph and tucking away his magnifier, "I'll tell you what I know. Just before I left the hotel in the town here I went up to your room for a word with you. You weren't in; but just before I got to the hall where your room is situated, I met Delancy and Reel coming from the direction of your room along that hall. You can put two and two together."

"And make them out scoundrels in doing so," said Jack. "They were in my room, and they took this locket."

"Stole it, you think?"

"I don't know. More likely they didn't intend to keep it. Probably they'd heard about it, and how it was given to me, and thought it would rattle me and make my pitching poor if I found it gone. That's my guess. Of course, I don't know what they went to my room in the first place for. But I imagine I'm right about this."

"I know you are," said Tom. "What they wanted to see you about I don't know; but that's why they took this talisman."

"Say!" Jack slapped his knee. "I have it! They came up there to see Jubal. Jubal has been with me, in my room, a good deal to-day—ever since we landed in Cardiff. You know I told you of that talk he made——"

Skeen had secured a hit on the fourth pitched ball,



and was sprinting for first. And Connie Lynch was going to the slab.

"That talk, you know—I told you about Jubal saying he'd like to understand this hypnotism that Reel has worked. I laid him off, you know. That I did because he seemed addled and not in a condition to understand what he was doing. He said the ball was as big as a bucket and that the pitcher threw it right at him. Now, I think I see through that. Reel got hold of him, worked some devilish spell on him, and that was the result."

Tom looked around.

"Where is Jubal?"

"I don't know. He was mooning over there a while ago. He's either sick or Reel has tricked him. And I'm sure it's the last."

Skeen had stolen second; and Connie Lynch had made a hit, sending him to third.

Then Wilson Crane—long-legged Wilson—after being almost struck out, connected with one of Tige Murphy's curves, and batted out a great liner that brought Skeen howling home.

"What are you going to do about it?" asked Tom, speaking to Jack.

"I don't know. But I'll fasten this thing down on Delancy and Reel, and then I'll make them squeal for their fun."

Nat Kimball bunted to third, and the third baseman, throwing to the plate to catch Connie Lynch, let little Gnat take first, while Connie ran back to third safely; and thus the bases were filled—with Gnat on first, Crane on second and Lynch on third.

"Jack Lightfoot!" called the umpire.

And Jack took up Old Wagon Tongue and walked to the rubber.

Jack had not been oblivious as to what was going on, even though so busily engaged in talking with Tom. He had seen every play and almost every pitched ball, and had even signaled to Nat to bunt.

Now he faced the pitcher, Tige Murphy.

Murphy was going up in a balloon. The people who watched him said he was "playing Tom Lightfoot," referring to Tom's startling tour toward the clouds.

Jack saw the nervous look in the Cardiff pitcher's red face.

Murphy had filled the bases, and one run had been made.

The score was tied, and with Jack Lightfoot at the bat—the best batter, with perhaps the exception of Brodie, in the Cranford nine—Murphy was beginning to see visions of defeat for Cardiff.

And for Cardiff to be defeated by this team from the little two-by-four town of Cranford, by this nine that played in a league no larger than the Four-Town League—why, the very thought was enough to sear his mind like a dash of vitriol.

The Cardiff nine would be disgraced for the summer!

If they had once dreamed of that they would not have invited Cranford so airily to play this game.

They had expected to see some good work from the boys of Cranford, but not this!

Why, this was the kind of playing that won games!

It seemed that it was about to win one from Cardiff.

Jack Lightfoot's face flushed slightly, for he realized what depended on him and what his nine expected of him; but he was calm, his gray-blue eyes were clear, and, somehow, that restored talisman, tucked in an inner pocket of his ball clothing, seemed to give him strange confidence.

It had come back to him in so remarkable a way that the thing itself seemed to speak of victory, and that thought steadied his hand.

Murphy was a good pitcher, but he was not doing himself justice.

He put over a wide ball, which Jack let go by; and then another, which Jack let pass him.

The runners were playing well off the bases, each confident that Jack would get a hit.

Then he smashed the ball.

It was a great hit, too high, perhaps; but when the people saw it sailing, and saw the runners jumping along the base lines, and saw Jack tearing toward first, with the runner from third crossing the plate, they cheered in a way to make the ground shake.



"Over the fence!" was howled.

Jack had done something not done before that day—he had put the ball over the fence.

And then the runners came on home, and Jack came home, and the Cranford fans yelled and yelled until it seemed they could yell no more, and the mascot, getting his breath and his courage again, frisked and barked and fluttered the Cranford colors, as if he, too, understood what it was all about.

As Jack came in, crossing the plate, he saw the Cranford girls, and even staid Mrs. Livingston, standing up in the grand stand, waving their flags and cheering.

Delancy and Reel?

Oh, they were sick—sick!

Tige Murphy now lost his head completely.

The captain of the Cardiff nine, Ray Gilbert, he who had written to Cranford that airy challenge, aided the Irish pitcher in losing whatever power and skill still remained to him, by berating him for what he had done.

Finally he took Murphy out of the box and put in Steve Soden.

But Soden did not do much better

He let two more men come across the home slab—they were Tom Lightfoot and Brodie Strawn—and then the Cardiff fielders, getting their nerve again, put out the three needed men by fielding the balls that Cranford had no trouble in hitting.

Jack Lightfoot went into the pitcher's box.

His face was shining.

Out on the diamond Ned Skeen was turning hand-springs of joy.

All the boys were delighted and confident.

Victory was in the air.

And Jack made it a sure thing by getting a good grip on the spit ball and striking three men out straight.

Cranford had won.

The score was phenomenal—being thirteen runs for Cranford and seven for Cardiff, and made up for two recent defeats that Jack's nine had suffered.

The Cranford fans were fairly doing cakewalks in their wild jubilation.

The Cranford flags were fluttering.

The Cranford girls were clapping their hands and cheering.

And Reel and Delancy had taken a "sneak," having disappeared.

## CHAPTER XV.

### AN APPEAL FOR MERCY.

That evening, after Jack had reached home, and had his supper, and had told his mother of the strange occurrences in Cardiff, there was a knock on the door.

Going to the door Mrs. Lightfoot saw there Lily Livingston.

Mrs. Lightfoot was always hospitable and cordial.

"Why, come right in," she invited, though she did not know Lily Livingston very well.

"Is Jack at home?" Jack heard Lily ask.

"Yes, indeed; he's been home these two hours or more. Come in; it's dark out there."

Then Lily Livingston came in.

Usually this girl was a most self-assured creature. Nothing daunted her. But now she seemed confused and not to know what to say. Her tanned face was flushed and her eyes looked very bright, as if she were frightened.

"Could I see you alone a little while—just a few moments?" she asked of Jack.

"I'll go out into the kitchen," said Mrs. Lightfoot, suiting the action to the word and disappearing.

Jack was on his feet.

"Have a chair," he invited, and placed a chair for her.

She took it, and began to peel down one tan glove from a tanned hand.

She was so nervous she did not know what she was doing.

"Perhaps you know why I have come?" she said at last.

Jack admitted that he had not the least idea; but declared that she was welcome, just the same, and he was glad to see her.

"Well, it's about Delancy and Reel."

"Oh!" said Jack.



"Now perhaps you know."

"Can't say that I do even yet."

Yet Jack began to have a glimmering of an idea.

"I've been hearing some things," she went on.

"You've found out that Delancy faked a photograph and tried to get you into trouble at Cardiff—tried to get you arrested."

"Yes," Jack admitted.

"And you're going to have him arrested for that—going to tell the Cardiff officers."

"Well, I intended to, if I could nail down the proof against them. I said that to the boys on the way home. It seems to me that I ought to."

"I heard about it; some of the boys have been talking and it came to me. Do you intend to yet?"

"I think I ought to; don't you? Perhaps you can't look at it just in the same light. But see what they tried to do!"

"You haven't got proof against them, you say?"

"I'm hoping to get the proof. Tom and all the others are going to help me. We know some things now and guess some, and we think we can do it."

Lily caught him impulsively by the hands.

"Don't!"

"Don't you think I ought to?" said Jack, withdrawing his hands.

"No matter about that; don't—don't—please don't!"

"Of course you're interested, and——"

"You can't know how much I'm interested. In the first place, that would drive Delancy away from here."

Jack thought it more likely it would put him in jail. And if it made him leave the town it occurred to him that would be a good thing.

"I don't want him to go, and my mother doesn't. He's the very best friend we've got. I see I must make a confession to you. You won't repeat it?"

"Anything you want me to keep I will."

"I know I can trust you, and I'll say this to you; Delancy is distantly related to us, and being very rich he doesn't mind giving us what money we need, if we run short now and then. And then—then—there are other things."

"Yes?" said Jack, not knowing what else to say.

"Won't you drop it, please, for me?"

Jack twisted uneasily in his chair. He did not want to drop it.

"I'll tell you what I will do."

"Oh, anything!" she cried.

"You have a talk with Delancy, and with Reel, and tell them that they must stop this persecution that they've seen fit to indulge in. They've got to stop it. If you'll do that I'll let this matter go."

She caught his hands again.

"I will—I will; I'll make them give me their solemn promise. And I know they'll keep it."

Jack was not so sure of that himself.

\* \* \* \* \*

That night Jerry Mulligan celebrated the winning of the wager by painting the town of Cranford red.

Saul Messenger, who had paid a fine in Cardiff and had been released, assisted Jerry in putting on the blood-red colors, and many others of the Cranford fans took part, so far as fireworks and bonfires could accomplish that task.

As for Jubal, having apparently come back to himself once more, he walked over to Jack's, while this town-painting was going on, and begged Jack's forgiveness.

He insisted, however, that he had not been hypnotized by Reel—and he believed this to be true—but declared that he must have been taken sick in some strange way.

Yet, when he acknowledged that talk with Reel, Jack was sure that Jubal had been under the evil influence of the cunning magician.

"Keep away from him after this, Jube," was his counsel.

"But, by granny," said Jube, earnestly, "if a feller could only understand and work that hypnotin' there'd sure be a wad o' money in it!"

THE END.

Next week's issue, No. 24, will be a splendid out-of-doors story. "Jack Lightfoot's Mad Auto Dash; or, Speeding at a Ninety-Mile Clip." A mad automobile ride, with plenty of excitement, together with some fun and lively incidents, make a story that you will enjoy.



# A CHAT WITH YOU

Under this general head we purpose each week to sit around the camp fire, and have a heart-to-heart talk with those of our young readers who care to gather there, answering such letters as may reach us asking for information with regard to various healthy sports, both indoor and out. We should also be glad to hear what you think of the leading characters in your favorite publication. It is the editor's desire to make this department one that will be eagerly read from week to week by every admirer of the Jack Lightfoot stories, and prove to be of valuable assistance in building up manly, healthy Sons of America. All letters received will be answered immediately, but may not appear in print under five weeks, owing to the fact that the publication must go to press far in advance of the date of issue. These who favor us with correspondence will please bear this in mind, and exercise a little patience.

THE EDITOR.

I wish to congratulate you on the really sterling worth of your new publication, namely, the ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY. The stories are all right in every respect, and the descriptions of the different characters and the places in which the scenes of the stories are laid, are natural and true to life.

Stories of good, clean, square sport are bound to be read, and when they are well written and placed within neat yet attractive covers, as the stories of your publication are, its popularity is assured. There is too much of the "blood-and-thunder" class of literature on the news stands to-day. What the boys of this age need are stories that will show them how to build up a nation of men of brawn as well as brain. Down with the miserable publications that fog the brain and make would-be desperadoes out of our boys!

There is only one way to do this, and that is, to put more of the ALL-SPORTS kind of a weekly before the growing American boy. If this is done, gradually the "Bloody-Dick" class will disappear.

I can truly say that the ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY has the most dainty and artistic covers on the market. I am glad to see that you have given up the last two pages every week for letters from the different readers, and it gives me great pleasure to send this, my first letter, to the ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY.

Hoping that it will fulfill its promise of a brilliant career, I am,  
Baltimore, Md. C. E. COCHRANE, JR.

We fully agree with you, dear boy, that the boys of to-day need stories "that will show them how to build up a nation of men of brawn as well as brains," and it has been our purpose to supply that need in the ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY. Your words of praise for our efforts and your appreciation of the pains we take to publish a thoroughly first-class and up-to-date weekly for American boys, these are, indeed, very gratifying to us. You say this is your first letter to us. We sincerely hope it will not be the last. Write us frequently. Get the habit.

I have been following the letters in ALL-SPORTS for some time, especially those about gymnastic training. I have long wanted to do some training myself, but I live far from any town and there are only two or three boys in our vicinity. You see, I think I ought to get more exercise than I do, especially as I am going to a boarding school next year and I don't know anything about such things. Then, I am afraid of my heart. I cannot take any violent exercise without having fearful pains; if I hurry upstairs, for instance, I have to stop every little while to take breath, and a long walk kills me. My measurements are different from any I have read about. I am 5 feet 6 inches in

height. My weight is 160 pounds. My chest is 37 inches; waist, 29 inches; hips, 37 inches; thighs, 23 inches. I live out here on a plantation, and don't have much call to move around, so I reckon I'm a little large. I would like to get in good condition before I meet boys from all over the country. Will you tell me how I stand and suggest some way of training? Would you advise me to buy any apparatus, and where could I get it?

Near St. Maurice, La.

A. L. C.

Your desire to get in good condition, dear A. L. C., is a commendable one, for we have never had a letter from a boy who needed training more. Your size and proportions are phenomenal. You weigh fully forty pounds too much. Your waist is two inches above the average, your hips three and your thighs three. We don't wonder you pant when you climb stairs, and a good eight-mile walk would make you sick for a week. More than that, your present great weight is liable to be a serious injury to you. Great weight affects the heart, and you should reduce yourself especially on that account. If you went to boarding school in your present condition you would receive the nickname "Fat" immediately. Begin your training by walking. Get up early, before the heat of the day is felt at all, and walk, at first a short distance, and then gradually longer distances. Before the autumn you should be walking at least five miles every morning. You have, probably, a large appetite. Curb it, eat less than you are accustomed to have to give you complete satisfaction. Eat little or no pastry, no matter how tempting or appetizing it may look or smell. And avoid all indolence. Keep as busy as you can, moving about all the time. In a few months you will find your flesh greatly reduced and will have no difficulty with your heart. If you have a tennis court near you, get out and play. No mild exercise is more beneficial than tennis; it takes off the flesh and makes you as hard as nails. These suggestions are easily within your power to adopt. We might suggest more elaborate exercises, involving the use of apparatus, but their cost is considerable, and it would be better for you to put off buying any until you have had some training in the gymnasium of your school. A weight and pulley machine can be purchased at small cost, however, and it might be advisable for you to get one and work with it. A. G. Spalding & Co., of Springfield, Mass., manufacture a full line of athletic supplies. Write them and find out what such an appliance would cost you. Train regularly and systematically all summer, and when you go to school the boys will have no reason to call you "Fat" or any other such epithet.

Since ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY started, I have been a constant reader, and I want to say that I like the stories first-rate. One thing I do not like, all the same—the girls. I don't see why in every story of boys and sports the author has to introduce some foolish girls, who never do anything but stand on one side and giggle and make mistakes. Girls are a tough proposition, anyway; they never see a game or any sport in its proper light, and they are always suspicious. If a fellow happens to do anything that can be misunderstood, girls always misunderstand; if there is a sneak in the crowd, he always makes himself solid with them and they are on his side. And if they set themselves out to make themselves unpleasant for a fellow they can do the trick in first-class style. I don't see why Mr. Stevens could not leave these girls out of his stories. They are not so bad, as girls go, but they're girls, and really good, sensible fellows like



Jack don't really care anything about them. The idea of making believe Jack felt mean because one of them got mad and believed he had killed her dog—that's just like a girl, too. They are always playing little, spiteful tricks on each other, and they think boys are just as small. I would like to see what some others of your readers think about asking Mr. Stevens to cut the girl part out altogether in the stories to come.

Salem, Mass.

STEVEN B. BISHOP.

My dear boy, you are on the fair road to become a fearful woman hater. This period of intense disgust with girls always precedes that state or mushiness. Your criticisms of girls are altogether unjust; we fancy you are covering up great admiration under a cloak of scorn. You cannot expect a girl to understand and appreciate a ball game just as much as you do, and then you laugh at her for her inability to appreciate fine points in play. On the other hand, did you ever stop to think what a fool you would make of yourself trying to do at all what most girls do well—sewing, cooking and so on? And when you next feel inclined to sneer, try to imagine what a figure you would cut trying to excel in any girls' occupation. If you are a sensible lad, you will realize that boys and girls, as men and women, have different ways of living and thinking, and that the wise thing for a member of either sex to do is not to sneer at, but to sympathize with, the other. Don't be a woman hater. There is no more stupid figure a man can play than that.

I read your ALL-SPORTS every week, because there are no other boys' stories that make such a hit with me. Nobody from here has written, so far as I know, but that is no sign that there are no ALL-SPORTS readers here. Lots of the fellows buy it, and all like it. Of course Jack is the hero, and a fine fellow, but next to him I like Lafe. I know a fellow here just like Lafe—quiet, steady, and always chewing any old thing except the rag. We are forming a baseball club, and I find your articles on that sport very instructive. I want to find out some points in regard to certain plays. Can I write direct to the gentleman who writes on baseball, or do I have to write to ALL-SPORTS? Hoping to see this letter answered, I close, with best wishes,

E. L. B.

Colby, Kan.

We are glad to hear that the boys of your city find Jack and his friends good fellows and that you recognize some of the characters in your chums. You could pay the author no higher compliment, and we are sure that Mr. Stevens will feel highly gratified. For any special information on baseball matters, you had better write direct to the baseball department. While the editor of that department would be glad to answer personal letters from boys interested in his subjects, his time is so occupied that he is unable to do so. All letters to ALL-SPORTS, on baseball or any athletic subjects, will receive prompt attention, subject to the conditions mentioned in the little camp-fire chat at the head of this column.

Although you may be surprised to learn that you have at least one girl reader of your library, I assure you that I have read all the stories published so far, and intend to read those to come. I like them very well, although, of course, I do not understand the really scientific points in the game of baseball. The boys all seem nice and straightforward and manly—I mean Jack and his friends; as for the others, they are very mean. It seems to me they are more jealous than ever girls can be—I think boys usually are more jealous than girls—and that they would be a great deal better off if they would recognize how smart Jack is, and side with him rather than against him. But then, I suppose, we should have no stories. I got into reading these stories in a funny way. My brother was reading them and used to talk a lot about them to the family. One day I criticised him for always talking Jack Lightfoot and baseball, and he answered me by inviting me to read the stories myself and see if I did not like them, too. I followed his advice, and now mother says that she doesn't know which of us is the more enthusiastic admirer of Jack. So, you see, I must like these tales. However, there is one thing I should like to criticise, and that is the author's failure to understand girls'

nature. In No. 14, for instance, he makes Kate Strawn believe that Jack would be mean enough to kill her dog. Now, I don't think that any girl who knew that she was admired by a handsome young fellow like Jack, so manly and honest, would believe any such charge against him, no matter how likely it might sound. She would know right off that it couldn't be true, and she would remain faithful to him. I think Mr. Stevens ought to study girls as well as he does boys. Girls are often said to be mean and spiteful, but that is not true. I am a girl, and I know what I am talking about, and I am sure that girls are no more mean or spiteful or jealous than boys. No real boy would suspect a good fellow like Jack of any such mean trick, and no real girl would do so, either. I think that the author treats girls real mean in this, and I hope he will not do so again. With best wishes for Jack and his friends, believe me,

Springfield, Ill.

A. L. S.

It is quite a surprise, dear young lady, to learn that we have one of your sex among our readers and that you find these stories interesting. We are very glad to learn this, and feel highly flattered that you intend to keep on reading them. As for your criticism of the author's attitude toward girls, we confess that we had never looked at it in the light you do. If he has been treating your peers unjustly, we are sure that it was unintentional. Of course, we cannot pretend to understand the feminine nature, and we accept your criticism as from one who understands the matter better than we do. But, we assure you that it was no exposition of masculine meanness, but merely ignorance. We hope that you will find no further grounds for criticism on this score.

I have watched ever since you began to print letters from readers to see if anybody in Great Bend would write, but not seeing any letters from here, I thought I would try my hand myself, and write. I have read every issue of the ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY, and I am well pleased with Jack and his friends. There are several boys here who read the stories, and they all like them. We have a little gym, such as Mr. Stevens describes. Although I am not the leader, I take great interest in muscular development. Will you tell me how my measurements are? I am 15 years old and stand 5 feet 5½ inches. My weight is 124 pounds; chest, 34 inches; waist, 28 inches; hips, 34 inches; thighs, 21 inches. I am told that I ought to carry a little more weight. What do you think?

HENRY ALTHEIDE.

Great Bend, Kan.

Don't worry about being thin, Henry, for if you keep on at your present gait you will be patronizing some anti-fat quack in a few years. Your weight exceeds the average weight of boys of your height about seven pounds. How do you take your exercise? Sitting down? Your chest is good, but your girth about the waist and thighs is altogether too big. Train down a little. Go in for running, and cut off your diet list all rich foods and heavy pastry. Such eating is always unwholesome, but with your tendency to take on flesh, you should be particularly careful to avoid it. For a boy of your height, a good weight would be 117 pounds; waist, 26½ inches; hips, 33½ inches. A good way for you to get in condition would be to play baseball. Try it for a while.

I have read the ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY from No. 1 to 16, and there is something about Mr. Stevens' composition which I like very much. Jack Lightfoot is my best friend in this series. As the apple season will soon be here again, I suppose Lafe will start to munch his favorite fruit. Why don't Jack and Kate have a few moonlight strolls by the Cranford Lake? Will his mamma allow it? We have a club, "Ansonia" by name, which is something similar to Jack Lightfoot's club. Three cheers for Lightfoot. Yours very truly,

PAUL A. PASSANANTE.

432 Second Avenue, New York City.

Perhaps Jack does indulge in a few of those strolls. An author is not compelled to tell every little detail in the life of his hero. And these are stories of athletic endeavor, Paul, not love romances.



# HOW TO DO THINGS

By AN OLD ATHLETE.

Timely essays and hints upon various athletic sports and pastimes, in which our boys are usually deeply interested, and told in a way that may be easily understood. Just at present baseball is the topic in hand, and instructive articles may be found in back numbers of the ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY, as follows: No. 14, "How to Become a Batter." No. 15, "The Science of Place Hitting and Bunting." No. 16, "How to Cover First Base." No. 17, "Playing Shortstop." No. 18, "Pitching." No. 19, "Pitching Curves." No. 20, "The Pitcher's Team Work." No. 21, "Playing Second Base." No. 22, "Covering Third Base."

## PLAYING THE OUTFIELD.

Long ago, when we were young in the game and generally green, the captain of our team assigned us to the outfield, center. We were indignant that such a slight should be put upon us, we fancied ourselves suited for better things, and yet we could not help secretly congratulating ourselves on getting such a cinch. Flies were infrequent, we boys played a strange and wonderful game, and the outfielder had a happy time. Then one fine and never-to-be-forgotten day, a "big" team—amateurs from the nearby small city, honored us with a game. And the outfielder had the time of his life. Never shall he forget the frequency, the perversity and the unexampled ginger of those flies. Crack would sound the bat and then, straight out of the sun would the ball come wiggling. After our opponents had made nine runs in one inning, the unfortunate fielder came to realize his ignorance, and the tremendous importance of the outfielder in a well-played game. He realized, once for all, that that position was no cinch.

Don't kick if you are assigned back of first, back of second or back of shortstop and third. You're in a hard position, and you'll need all your wits and all your skill if you want to make a success of your work. Catching flies is not the only work you have to do. Even that is no dead one's game. It's easy enough to catch a soaring ball when you know it's coming and the direction it's coming in. But get on the field and try it. And you'll find that the craziest girls' guessing game never was in it.

In the first place, you need good, strong eyes—strong enough to see in the face of the sun and keen enough to follow the ball from the moment it rises from the bat. Fasten your eyes on that ball as it goes to the bat and then follow it like a hound on the scent. If you make the mistake that most young fielders make, and wait to look for the ball until you hear it struck, something will happen sure—the ball will drop on your head, or it will fall so far short or so far away that all hopes of making a play are gone. A strong batsman can make a swift ball travel almost as quick as sound; the ball will be on you as soon as you hear the sound of it being struck. So keep your eyes on it.

You must be able to throw as well as to catch; a good throwing arm is essential. And you must throw quickly. Some of the greatest plays in the game have been made outfield by quick plays. Some years ago, McCarthy, of the Bostons, put out four men by quick play. There were

three men on bases and the man at the bat knocked a mile high one. The three on bases got back to the plate and the batsman was within a few feet of third when Mac, running backward, caught the ball high with his right and plunked it to third just in time to put the runner out. Under the old rules he thus made the only four play in the history of the game. Had Mac not possessed what almost amounted to a genius in gauging the ball, and the power of throwing in air straight, he never would have won the reputation that play gave him. Practice getting under all kinds of flies, picking up tantalizing grounders, and throwing like a shot on the run; you'll need to be able to do all these things outfield.

You must be able to run fast, to keep running fast and to start running fast. You must keep in splendid training and you must accustom your lungs to hard and constant work. Practice running like a flash; get some one to start you by clapping his hands. At first it may take you a half second to get going; but, by practice, you can develop the power that made Duffey, the great hundred-yard man—the power to start at full speed in a fraction of a second. Duffey once told us that the way he ran his races was at the beginning, the getaway. He practiced it for years. To-day he is on the spurt almost before the others have time to blink. You must acquire this faculty, and the faculty of doing this on an uneven and unknown field. The outfielder runs more chances of injury than any other man; a stumble, a stone, a piece of wire left carelessly on the field may cause the fielder a broken leg or a broken arm. Look the ground over and know the field, always.

You must know how to back up the other fielders and the basemen. This playing is the result of team work, and should be studied by all. The baseman or the shortstop may miss the ball; you must back him up if he is in your portion of the field. You must learn to pick up grounders as well as pull down flies. You must watch the men at the bat and learn their peculiarities; a right-handed batter will be apt to put over third, shortstop and left fielder; a left-handed batter will send the ball over first and right fielder. Some men send high flies, some low; some send a long drive, some a short; some do both and leave the fielder in doubt whether to play deep or in. All this must be learned by close observation. The effect of the wind must be gauged. Find out the direction of the wind, observe its strength, and play accordingly. Don't worry over failure here; the wind plays strange tricks, and even the best fielders in the game get deceived.

And finally, use judgment in your play. On a single, get the ball to second. Various combinations of play call for various plays. Study the game as you study the batters. Work in concert with the pitcher and the other fielders by a scheme of signals. Learn to throw and to take care of your throwing arm. Use a big glove, the best glove you can buy, and break it in before you use it in a game. And finally, practice, practice, practice running, catching and throwing. That's the game, and if you think it's a cinch and a lady's position, try it. You will wake up with a start.



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